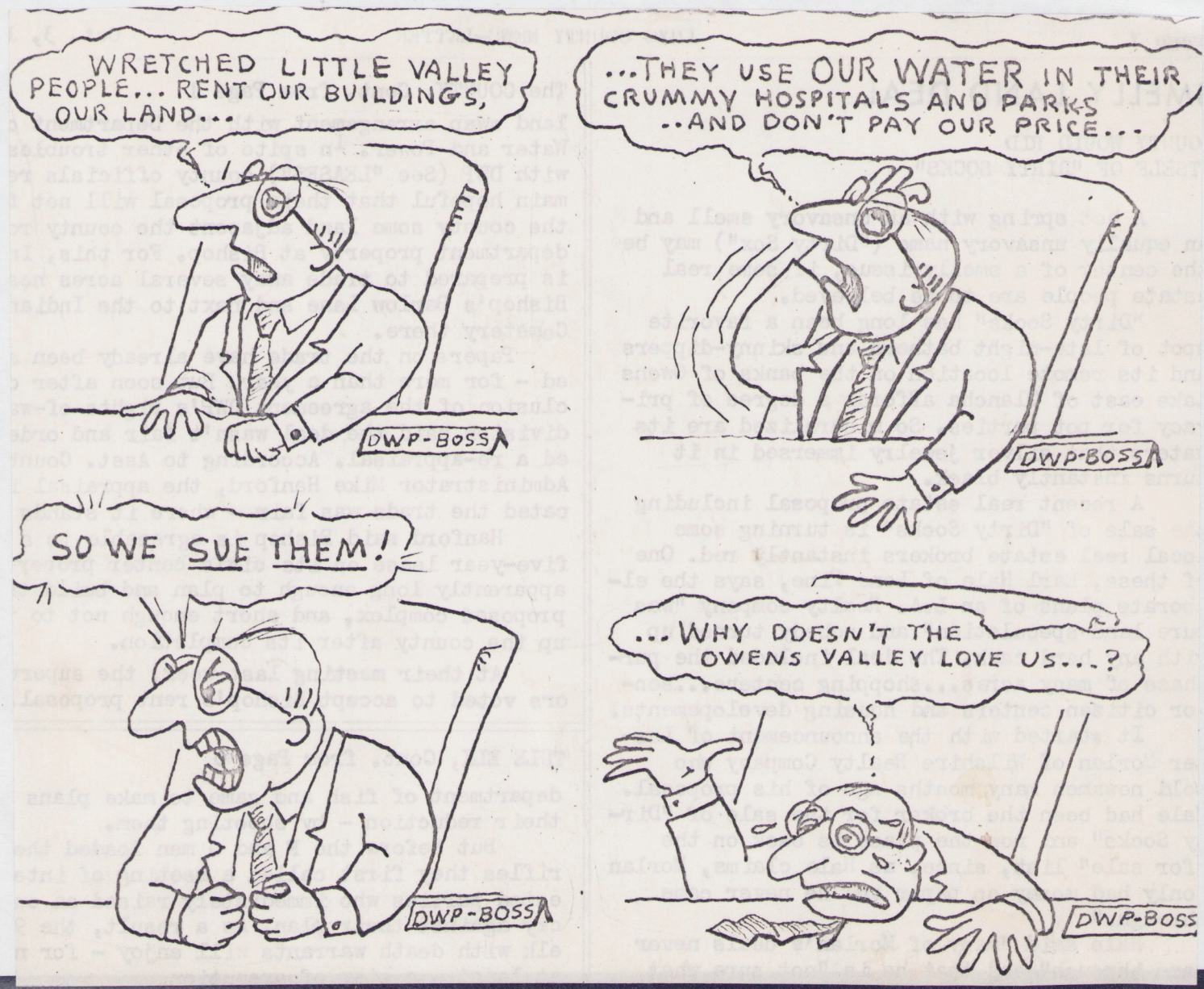
L.A. AQUEDUCT


WRETCHED LITTLE VALLEY PEOPLE... RENT OUR BUILDINGS, OUR LAND...
DWP-BOSS
...THEY USE OUR WATER IN THEIR CRUMMY HOSPITALS AND PARKS ..AND DON'T PAY OUR PRICE...
DWP-BOSS
SO WE SUE THEM!
DWP-BOSS
...WHY DOESN'T THE OWENS VALLEY LOVE US...?
DWP-BOSS

the Owens Valley Committee

the RAIN SHADOW

THE OWENS VALLEY COMMITTEE • VOL. 8 NO. 1 • SPRING/SUMMER 2013 • WWW.OVCWEB.ORG

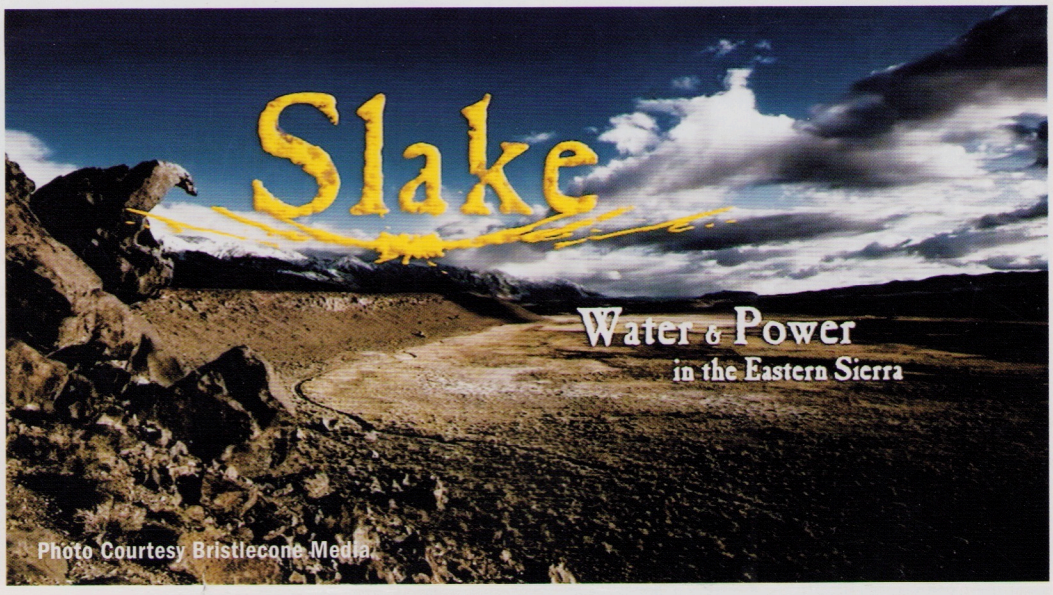
w e w a t c h t h e w a t e r

Aqueduct Centennial 2013
100 Years of Injustice

In February 1913, the City of Los Angeles Department of Water and Power (DWP) closed the "gates," which they had constructed on Owens River, and completely diverted all of the river's flow into their newly-constructed aqueduct. Many miles of scenic river, vast meadows, and an entire inland lake were thus deprived of water. This act forever altered the socio-economic and ecological landscape of Owens Valley. Those of us who live here experience the repercussions of this event on a daily basis.

Donate for a Strong Voice for the Owens Valley

With the deadline for the Metabolic Studio matching grant coming up on June 30 (page 3), there has never been a better time to help OVC protect the Eastern Sierra. OVC has a Slake video series funding campaign at www.indiegogo.com until June 18 (see adjacent story) and there are great donor incentives. To earmark your donation for Slake, Google Indiegogo, type "Slake" in the search box, and click on the picture that comes up. If you choose not to donate online, just write "Slake" on your check to OVC to earmark it for that and use the enclosed envelope. And you can always donate through the OVC website. All donations will be matched by the Metabolic Studio until June 30!



Help Launch An Exciting New Video Series Called Slake

By Nina Weisman

The Los Angeles Department of Water and Power continues its disregard for the Owens Valley. LADWP has sued to avoid finishing dust mitigation; is attempting to get permission to pump groundwater from under Owens Lake; has sued the Mammoth Community Water District claiming water rights to Mammoth Creek; reduced water going to pasturelands in the Owens Valley; and continues to fail to complete mitigation projects ordered years ago. Meanwhile media outlets are flooded with press releases from the LADWP justifying their actions. The Owens Valley needs a voice!

OVC is partnering with Bristlecone Media to create a video series that will educate audiences about the uniqueness of the Eastern Sierra, the effects of LADWP's destructive water policies, and the struggle for ecological health and environmental justice in the Owens Valley, but we need your help!

The video series, *Slake: Water and Power in the Eastern Sierra*, will inform audiences about complex issues through a rich tapestry of images and dialogue, motivating people to join the battle for the Owens Valley. At least $30,000 will be needed for the first two videos, so we have set up a campaign on a crowd-funding website called Indiegogo. Please visit our 60-[illegible]n at **www.indiegogo.com**, then search for Slake. The campaign will run until June 18. We will receive matching funds from Metabolic Studio until June 30, so it is critical that you send us a donation before then.

Our goal is to produce two episodes by November, which is the centenary of the first LA Aqueduct water deliveries to LA. We will tour with the videos, showing them in the Owens Valley and in the LA area. We will counteract the propaganda that LADWP is spreading, educate Angelenos about where their water comes from, and get support from LA residents to enforce existing regulations that LADWP has been ignoring.

There is a time deadline for this fundraising effort, so please help. If you choose not to donate online, you can always send the OVC a check, and mark "Slake" in the notes box. The address to send checks is: OVC, Slake, PO Box 77, Bishop, CA 93515.

We have posted a fantastic short 'teaser' video. It can be seen at **www.slaketheseries.com**.

Join us in this remarkable effort to educate people about water in the Owens Valley, and to engage them in advocacy to help prevent more damage to this unique area. Thank you!

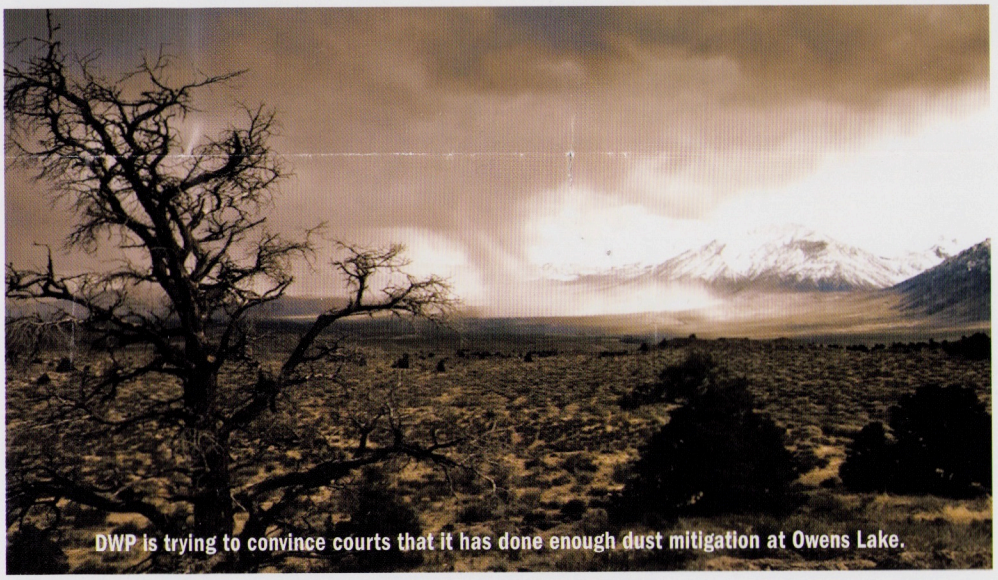
Current Owens Valley Water Issues

By the OVC Team

The year 2012 was busy as ever with water issues, and with the addition of this being the LA Aqueduct Centennial, 2013 is shaping up to be very busy as well.

Owens Lake: DWP Loses in Court (Again)

In November, DWP filed an aggressive Federal lawsuit against Great Basin Unified Air Pollution Control District and other state and federal agencies. This was an effort to evade some of its responsibilities for controlling the major dust problem caused by DWP's drying of Owens Lake. On May 2, the entire case was dismissed, some portions on substantive grounds, some on grounds the issues are already in State proceedings. DWP has filed a State lawsuit challenging the California Air Recources Board decision to uphold Great Basin's 2011 order for DWP to control dust on an additional 2.9 square miles of lake bed. DWP had refused to pay Great Basin's fees related to that challenge as required by law. Great Basin sued and in December Kern County Superior Court ordered DWP to pay more than $1 million in fees. The court set a penalty trial for October where DWP faces nearly $8 million in penalties for its refusal to pay Great Basin.



DWP is trying to convince courts that it has done enough dust mitigation at Owens Lake.

DWP vs. the Town of Mammoth Lakes

In DWP's lawsuit against the Mammoth Community Water District, DWP claims senior rights to the town's water supply. It is uncertain if DWP wishes the Town of Mammoth Lakes to disappear or if they simply want to extract a heavy price for the town's use of the water. Of course, the town has documentation showing it may legitimately use local waters. The judge has set a court date for this fall.

DWP Ignores Adaptive Management on the Lower Owens River

Problems persist in the Lower Owens River Project with too many cattails and tules, very little recruitment of native trees, and problems with water quality during high seasonal habitat flows. DWP has refused to agree with adaptive management recommendations for changes in flow management made in the past few years by the MOU Consultants and supported by OVC.

Crystal Geyser Cabin Bar Ranch Project

OVC is currently working to make sure that Crystal Geyser Roxane does not damage Cartago's seeps, springs and wells by groundwater pumping to supply a new facility. The company proposes to take 360 more acre-feet of water per year from its Cabin Bar Ranch property near Olancha. In March, OVC filed suit against Inyo County for approving the project with an inadequate EIR that did not address potential pumping impacts on neighbors wells and on biological resources in springs and wetland areas.

Long Term Water Agreement and EIR Mitigations Dragging

Mitigation projects promised as a result of the Long Term Water Agreement (LTWA) and specified in the 1991 Environmental Impact Report and elsewhere, have not been fully, nor in some cases, successfully implemented. More than 20 years have now passed without the valley receiving mitigation as promised for past environmental wrongs.

Pumping Protocols Flawed

Despite agreement between DWP and Inyo County that experimental groundwater pumping management protocols are flawed and thus insufficient to protect the valley, the two parties have made little progress in finding solutions over the past 6 years. At issue is the so-called Green Book, the manual for monitoring, and procedures for operating — or not — groundwater wells.

Still Too Much DWP Pumping

Ensuring Owens Valley is managed according to the goals of the water agreement remains a top priority of OVC. That means managing pumping to avoid significant declines in groundwater dependent vegetation. We are disappointed that pumping impacts in the Blackrock area have not been resolved after many years. The Blackrock 94 parcel dispute was not resolved by the Standing Committee last year and is just now going to arbitration. It's been two years since Inyo County's preliminary report concluded that DWP pumping had a significant impact there. Also, there are still too many areas where groundwater levels in DWP wellfields are below baseline levels.

New Supervisors – A Cause For Hope?

Three new Inyo County Supervisors were installed on the five-member board in January. OVC is hopeful that a fresh vision might alter the course with regard to the LTWA and bring justice to Owens Valley. Keith Bright was an Inyo County Supervisor involved in negotiating the LTWA. He had a vision for Inyo County parity with DWP in managing DWP's water operations in Owens Valley. We hope the new supervisors will embrace that vision.

Meadows to Midnight Building Destruction

The OVC also wrestles with dying meadows and rare plant populations; excessive pumping in the name of state fish hatcheries; wells which have been designated exempt from the LTWA; cutbacks in irrigation water throughout the valley — affecting wildlife habitat, and the valley's economy and scenery, not to mention being in violation of the LTWA — changes in surface water operations; "flexible" pumping programs and other novel means of water extraction dreamed up by DWP; destruction of historical buildings (sometimes in the middle of the night!); simmering plans to pump under the now-dry Owens Lake, at the expense of people's domestic wells and healthy spring and seep habitats; buying of more land and water rights while releasing very little.

GRAPHIC: Karen Brorson

Matching Grant Deadline Nears

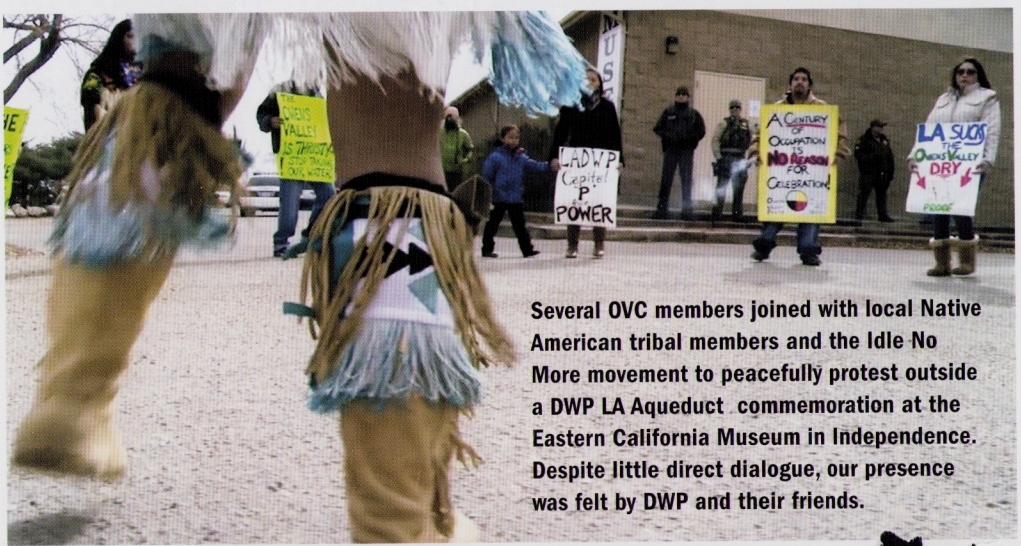
Still Time to Double Your Dollars

By the OVC Team

Metabolic Studio, a direct charitable activity of the Annenberg Foundation led by artist Lauren Bon, has generously provided a $50,000 grant to the OVC. The Studio is in the process of matching funds up to $50,000 additional dollars donated to OVC until midnight, June 30, 2013. Funds that will be matched include contributions over the basic $25 annual membership and any other cash donations or grants.

Thanks to all our supporters, we have currently raised more than $31,000, which have been matched by Metabolic Studio, and are seeking an additional $19,000 before the grant deadline. These funds shall be used to further the mission of OVC to the long-term protection, restoration, and sustainable management of lands and water-dependent ecosystems in the Owens Valley.

Please consider a tax-deductible donation before June 30 to assist us in meeting our current $19,000 goal for matching funds. Your support helps us to be a strong voice for water solutions that are beneficial for the people, plants and animals throughout the beautiful Owens Valley. OVC can receive funds through checks in the enclosed envelope or by donating on the OVC website, ovcweb.org or the Indiegogo Slake campaign website (see page 1).



Several OVC members joined with local Native American tribal members and the Idle No More movement to peacefully protest outside a DWP LA Aqueduct commemoration at the Eastern California Museum in Independence. Despite little direct dialogue, our presence was felt by DWP and their friends.

Reaching Out to Audiences Near and Far- OVC in the Community

In 2012, OVC revived a long dormant outreach program. Although still modest, we had meetings and programs in Bishop, Lone Pine and Ridgecrest. We held a series of seven Water Roundtable meetings, informal gatherings to discuss water issues, in Bishop and Lone Pine. In February 2012, we held our first annual winter fundraiser at the Mountain Light Gallery in Bishop. John Walton, UC Davis professor and author of Western Times and Water Wars was our featured speaker for the gathering of about 115 people. In September, Professor Walton returned to make presentations for OVC programs in Lone Pine and Ridgecrest. Five other OVC programs were held in Bishop and Lone Pine in 2012 and 2013 along with presentations to the Independence Civic Club and Bishop Lions Club and tabling at several public events.

There it is – Take It, an Audio tour

This year's featured speaker at the second annual winter fundraiser, Kim Stringfellow, is an artist and educator who focuses on challenging environmental issues. She received a Cal Humanities/National Endowment for the Humanities grant to prepare an audio tour containing personal stories relevant to Los Angeles' 100-year occupation and dewatering of Owens Valley. Her final product, "There It Is – Take It", may be accessed in its entirety at http://thereitistakeit.org/. Please take some time to listen to this oral history of the valley as told by people, including several OVC members, who have lived it first hand.

Eastern Sierra Birding Trail Maps & our OVC Membership brochures are available. Email outreach@ovcweb.org.

OVC Mission

OVC is a non-profit citizen action group dedicated to the protection, restoration and sustainable management of water and land resources affecting the Owens Valley. The Committee oversees compliance with the implementation of appropriate water management policy, educates the public, encourages participation in local government, and advocates an inclusive and open decision-making process.

OVC Goals

1. "Watchdog" the 1991 LTWA (Water Agreement) between Inyo County and L.A.
2. Oversee the implementation and management of the Lower Owens River Project (LORP).
3. Educate the public and promote its involvement with water issues.
4. Seek a dual use designation for dust control water at Owens Lake for wildlife as well as dust.

Peter Knapp

Find us on: facebook®

The OVC Board recognizes the importance of tapping into the latest means of communication. Receive regular updates and keep current on water issues by taking a moment to friend the OVC on **Facebook!**

the RAINSHADOW

The Rainshadow is the newsletter of the Owens Valley Committee. OVC is a 501 (c)(3) non-profit citizen's action group dedicated to the protection, restoration and sustainable management of water and land resources affecting the Owens Valley. The biannual report edition of The Rainshadow is produced in the Spring and Fall of each year. Send suggestions and corrections to the editor.

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Letters to the Editor

One of many 'truths' presented in historical book

8-1-2013

The mention of my little book "The Owens Valley Controversy and A. A. Brierly" has been made several times of late in the Letters to the Editor and on the front page of *The Inyo Register.* I have also been given the opportunity over the last few months to give presentations at both Cerro Coso Community College and, most recently, the Eastern California Museum. I wish to thank everyone for their interest in the subject and in my book.

I would like to say that my book is written to give a perspective of land sales to DWP through the eyes of people like Gus Cashbaugh (born 1883), and my grandfather A.A. Brierly (born 1884), people who were adults during, and participated in, the era in which all of the controversy first started. As I explain to audiences during my presentations, what I am offering in the book and presentations is my family history and the perspective from my family and their friends who had similar experiences and beliefs. I don't say it is the only perspective, just mine and of those people I grew up listening to tell stories about their first hand experiences selling their land to DWP.

I believe multiple "truths" exist about what occurred in the valley in the early 1900s depending upon the business one was in, location within the Valley, location (either higher or lower) on irrigations canals and the river, depositor of DWP land payments in the local bank or not, wealthy farmer or poor farmer, white settler or Native American; all these things would influence one's perception of what happened, good or bad.

As mentioned in one of the Letters to the Editor, there are other books to read on the subject, in fact there are a great many books, all with widely varying perspectives. My favorite is Abraham Hoffman's "Vision or Villainy." I think it is the most scholarly work available in book form. Two graduate publications, (both are available at http://disexpress.umi.com/dxweb), Charles Delameter's thesis, "The Owens Valley, City of Los Angeles, Water Controversy" (UMI 1310071) and Gordon Miller's dissertation, "Los Angeles and the Owens River Aqueduct" (UMI 7814844) are excellent scholarly works and avoid the biases found in many popular-press publications that have only fueled the division between DWP friends and foes.

I think the time of "us against them" has long outlived its usefulness. Our Valley history has been written, good or bad; it serves no purpose to keep "beating a dead horse." It is more a time for learning, discussion and willingness to accept that yes, there are different versions of what happened, and maybe each of us has our own biases, and perhaps we can learn from each other.

I am proud of what my grandfather did for Inyo county during his 65 years of employment for Inyo (1905-1970), I am equally proud of what he did during the land sales starting in the 1920s, and his life-long commitment to share his experiences and history of Inyo with anyone who would listen.

Thanks again to everyone who has provided me a forum to share my family history with the public. It is something I enjoy doing.

Rob Pearce
Bishop

Monitoring a river's rebirth

Eastern Sierra Watershed Project to give presentation on Lower Owens' dramatic transformation Saturday

By Jon Klusmire
Special to The Inyo Register

The largest river restoration project in the nation is under way in the Owens Valley, and one group has been observing the project's progress for the past 11 years. Beginning with collecting baseline data from a dry riverbed, the river watchers then waded into a flowing river to continue documenting the changes created by the addition of water to a once-dry river and its nearby landscape.

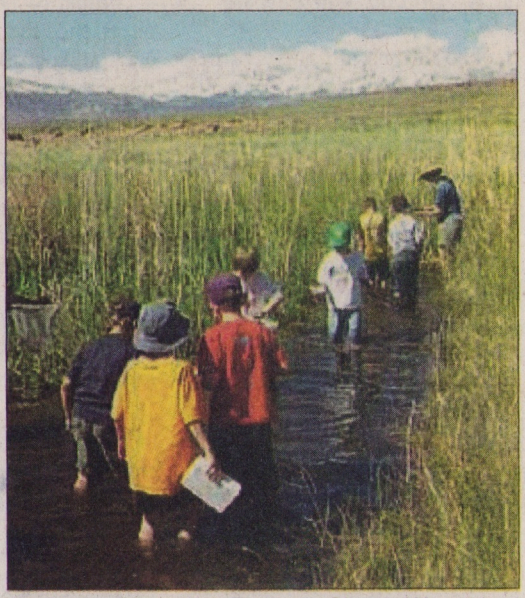
The Eastern Sierra Watershed Project started collecting data on the dry riverbed of the Lower Owens River in 2002. When the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power released water back into the Lower Owens River in 2006, the students participating in the Watershed Project continued to collect data each spring.

Photos and other information detailing the rather dramatic transformation of the stretch of 52 river miles from a dry or slightly soggy streambed to a flowing river will be presented on Saturday, July 27, at 7 p.m., at the American Legion Hall, at the corner of U.S. 395 and Kearsarge in Independence.

Katie Quinlan and Leigh Parmenter of the Eastern Sierra Watershed Project will present the data collected by the middle school students who have been participating in the program over the years. Quinlan noted that the LADWP and the County Water Department are "officially" monitoring the status of the re-watered river. But the Watershed Project gives local middle school students the opportunity to participate in their own monitoring of the river restoration effort.

"The ongoing project has given new meaning to hands-on science education, as local students experience their natural environment as a living laboratory through real-world scientific activities," she noted.

The presentation will include "before and after photos" of the Lower Owens River Project that students have taken over the past 11 years. Other data shows how the once-dry river is coming back to life and evolving as an ecosystem. Wildlife has been noted on the river's banks, and life is also spotted in the flowing river itself. The most visible result of the re-watering effort is the stripe of green riparian vegetation winding along the meandering riverbanks, and the greenery sprouting along the river on the valley floor.



Students from the Eastern Sierra Watershed Project wade into their monitoring work on the Lower Owens River. Photo courtesy Eastern Sierra Watershed Project

The transformation of the river, and the valley floor it travels through, occurred in a relatively short amount of time. In 1913, LADWP diverted the Owens River into the LA Aqueduct, which resulted in the river drying up from the Aqueduct Intake, north of Independence to the Owens Dry Lake. In 2006, a consistent, significant flow of water was once again allowed to flow in that once-dry stretch of river, when LADWP turned the water back into the streambed, creating the Lower Owens River restoration project as a mitigation measure the terms of the Long Term Water Agreement.

The Eastern Sierra Watershed Project was developed by the Eastern Sierra Institute for Collaborative Education, and has also been supported by LADWP, Inyo County and the Inyo County Superintendent of Schools.

Saturday's presentation is being hosted by the Metabolic Studio and the Eastern California Museum. Call (760) 878-0258 for more information.

Lady. I was able to use her phone to

Letters to the Editor

We stole it fair and square

When David Freeman was head of DWP he came to Owens Valley and summarized DWP's acquisition of Owens Valley water in one sentence: "We stole it fair and square." I was thus surprised to read the letter of July 23, 2013 citing two books and questioning the use of "steal" with regard to DWP's acquisition of Owens Valley land and water ("Inyo's water was not stolen outright"). The fact that some Owens Valley residents may have received good prices for their land does not change the ethically-challenged activities of J.D. Lippincott and Fred Eaton, which are the real basis of the theft accusation. For those interested in this subject I suggest William Kahrl's book, "Water and Power" (UC Press) is a better source than either of the books cited in the letter of July 23, 2013.

It's also important to realize that before L.A. "stole" Owens Valley water, Euro-Americans had "stolen" Owens Valley and its water from Native Americans. And it is a cruel irony that the legal system Euro-Americans imposed includes the doctrine of prior appropriation, or "first in time, first in use."

According to this doctrine, Owens Valley Paiutes should hold senior water rights for most Sierra Nevada streams between Round Valley and Independence. There is compelling evidence Paiutes diverted these streams for beneficial use centuries before Los Angeles existed. The best published source is "Agriculture among the Owens Valley Paiute" by H. W. Lawton, P. J. Wilke, M. DeDecker and W.M. Mason, in *The Journal of California Anthropology*. This is an "untold story" that could have profound consequences in the hands of good attorneys. Let us hope someday it will.

Daniel Pritchett
Bishop

Glad to contribute to firefighting efforts

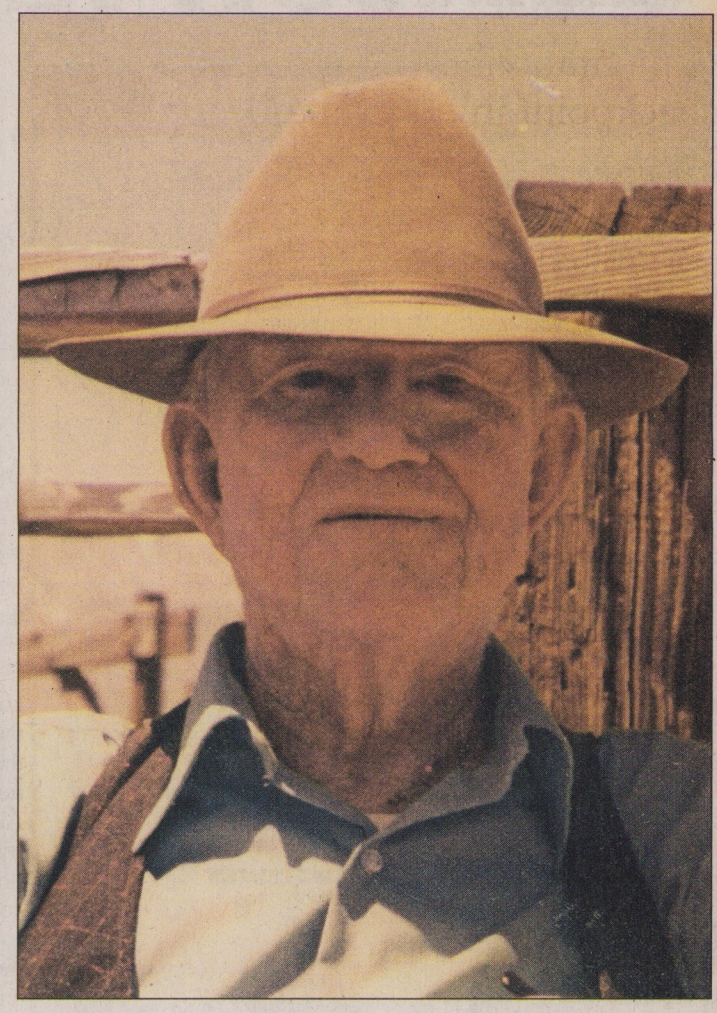
When I received CalFire's fire fee bill last summer, I paid the $150 gratefully and considered it a bargain. I expect to receive another bill this summer.

I live on the outer perimeter of the Starlite subdivion, which is entirely surrounded by U.S. Forest Service land. We are very vulnerable to wildfires on adjacent public lands. I've been told that Starlite is not technically protected by any fire district, yet firefighters from CalFire and other districts have always arrived within minutes of a reported fire. Those crews have been amazing;

Everyone deserves a 'Pa' in their lives like A.A. Brierly

By Rob Pearce, Ph.D.

8-13-2013



The author's "Pa," Owens Valley rancher A.A. Brierly, through the years: (l-r) at age 6 in 1890, at 79 in 1963 and at age 88 in 1972. More than just a grandfather to Rob Pearce, Brierly was Pearce's hero and confidant. Photos courtesy Rob Pearce

I recently was invited by the Eastern California Museum to give a presentation on my book I wrote 15 years ago about my grandfather, A.A. Brierly, and his involvement with the City of Los Angeles and the land sales. It was a great afternoon and everyone at the museum was so helpful, and the people who came to the presentation were very nice and interested in the topic. As is often the case, it is during the question and answer session where some of the most memorable things happen.

I apologize for not remembering the name, but a retired CHP officer in the audience told a story about my grandfather, who we called Pa. The story, in short, was about Pa going in for his driver's license renewal in Lone Pine. I suspect Pa was in his late 80s or early 90s when this occurred. My mom was getting concerned about Pa's driving and knowing Pa was going to get his drivers test, had called the DMV to ask them to really put my grandfather through the wringer, so to speak, in hopes that he wouldn't be given a new license. The CHP officer was aware of this and happened to be at the DMV when my grandfather drove in for his license test. He said Pa had a hard time getting out of the truck and shuffled across the parking lot. He was thinking to himself, "This doesn't look good," but as Pa neared the door he straightened up and extended his stride, and marched in the DMV office. The CHP officer said 20 years dropped from Pa in that instant. Pa passed the test despite the DMV putting him through a tough exam.

The story made me both sad and happy at the same time. In my mind's eye I can see Pa pushing his shoulders back, straightening his spine and extending his stride; clear as if he were in front of me, I can see it. When he was in his 80s and early 90s his gait did turn to a shuffle. He had a little portable stand to help him get in and out of his truck. Pa would have me watch him sometimes as he walked and extended his stride, or when he would go to his office at the Court House (where he worked until he was 85) and would make himself take two steps at a time, he wanted me to tell him if it looked OK. He talked to me about how hard it was to have your mind feel you were 20, but have your body give out. It wasn't complaining, just talking, and he fought getting old with dignity. The CHP story brought back so many memories. I lay awake most of the night remembering.

I was a bit of a loner in both elementary and high school. I went to my grandparents' home in Independence most weekends. I took the Greyhound bus back and forth between our home in Bishop and their home in Independence. Pa was my soft spot to fall. We talked of mines and mining, ranches and cattle, outlaws and horses, natural resources and poetry, history and religion. We wandered the valley in his old truck exploring the corners of the county. I have three stories I'd like to tell.

He understood kids better than about anyone I ever knew. The one time I got in trouble with him, my older brother Hugh and I hid from Pa in the culvert that takes Independence Creek under U.S. 395. He was calling us and we didn't respond. When Pa found us he took both of us, one in each hand, and put us in separate rooms. He didn't yell, he didn't spank, he just told me I disappointed him. Words that may not sound like much to the reader, but that hurt more than anything I ever heard. I had such admiration for him and I had let him down. I don't believe I ever did it again.

The second story took place when I was probably 14 or 15 (that would have put him 86 or 87) and I was not very tough, and I was, and still am, too emotional. We were getting out of his car in front of his house in Independence, and a car hit a cat right in front of us and they never stopped. The poor old cat was torn to pieces. I started crying and just kind of came undone. He talked to me and calmed me down, and then went over and picked the poor dead cat up. I can still see him bending over; it was hard for him. I should have done it. He took the dead cat and I to his back yard where we buried it next to where he said there was another cat, named Tom, that had belonged to my mom. We made a little cross out of surveying stakes and carved the name "Cat" on it (we never had seen the cat before it was hit). It was the perfect thing to do; he just seemed to know how to make things better.

My last story took place before the Monache Rodeo; I was in college and home for the summer. Ben Hodges, Dave Gruwell and I were entered up in multiple events. On the way down to the rodeo we stopped in Independence, so I could tell Pa we were off to the rodeo. It was early, probably before 7 a.m. and I ran in quickly to say hello. Pa was sitting on the edge of his bed wearing his long night shirt. I told him I was entered in the bronc riding events (my first time in a saddle bronc contest). He told me of a friend of his who was a noted bronc rider when Pa was young. This man told Pa the way to ride a bronc was to hold the reins in your left hand, saddle horn in your right hand and lean back. So Pa relayed the advice to me, and off Bennie, Dave and I went. It so happened that luck prevailed and I won third in the saddle bronc.

On the way back from the rodeo we stopped to visit my grandparents and tell them about the rodeo. I told Pa I won third place in the saddle bronc, a big grin came over his face and he said, "I knew you could do it if the bronc didn't buck too hard." When I told other people of my bronc success they would laugh or say you must have been lucky, but not Pa, he always believed in me.

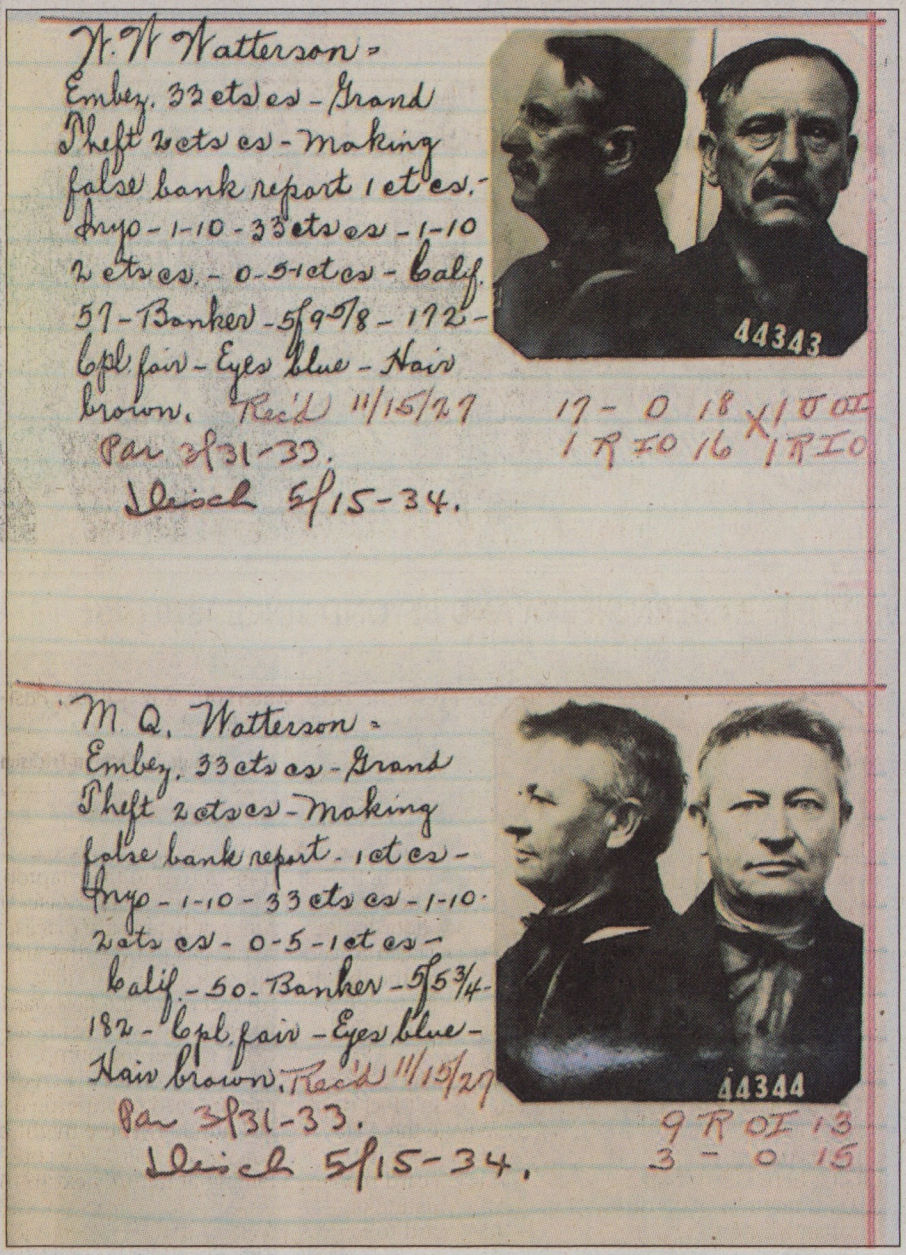
I have enumerable Pa stories; they play through my mind often. I miss him even more as I have gotten older. No one else in my life ever had more faith in me or believed in me as much as he did. I never understood why he felt that way. I guess we just fit together. Everyone in their life deserves to have a "Pa."

Thanks again for the wonderful time at the museum and the great remembrances.

This column's quote:
"Oh piffle!"
– A.A. Brierly (Pa's only expletive that I heard, and then only when really upset)

If you have any contributions for this column, please submit them to drrob95@excite.com or call me at 872-7856. Until the next column keep on ridin!

The author's grandfather, A.A. Brierly, is photographed in 1950 on a horse-drawn mowing machine in the hay meadows on Warm Springs Road, now part of the Giacomini Ranch. Photo courtesy Rob Pearce

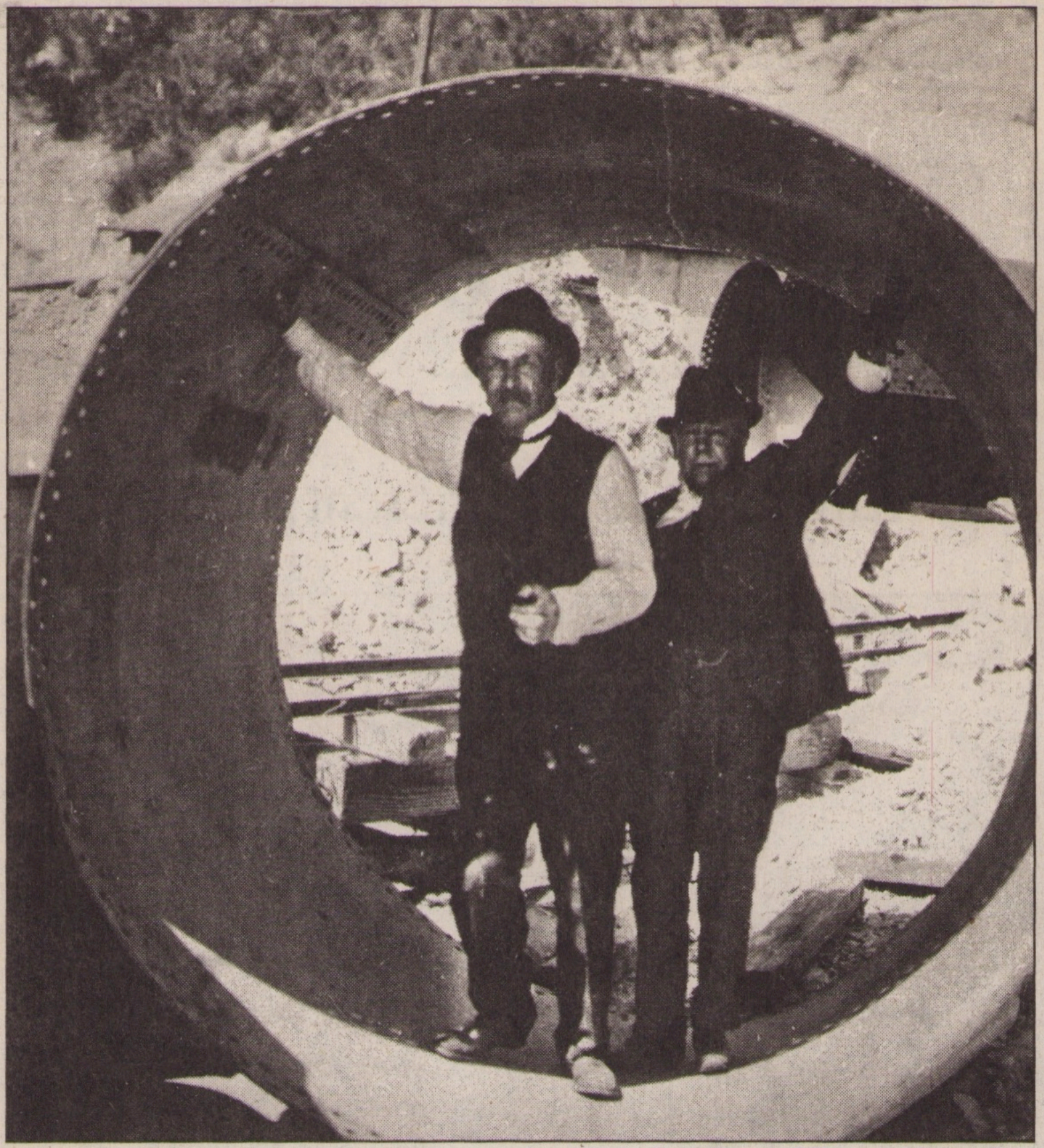


Throwback Thursday

Busted bankers

Jail records of the Watterson brothers, Wilfred and Mark, who owned banks in the Owens Valley that failed in 1927. It is controversial to this day about these men, and they are often the topic of controversy among Owens Valley residents. On one side folks say they were very lenient with the people to whom they generously loaned money. On the other side many people lost their life savings when their banks collapsed. In any case, they served time in San Quentin mostly on embezzling charges. Do you have a vintage photo – of yourself, your family or even local landmarks – you'd like featured for "Throwback Thursday" in an upcoming edition? If so, email it along with essential information to editor@inyoregister.com, or drop it off at the Register at 407 W. Line St., Ste. 8, Bishop.

Photo courtesy of Laws Museum



Los Angeles Department of Water and Power Ecco

WILLIAM MULHOLLAND, in front, with water commissioner Reginaldo del Valle in a section of 80-inch pipe circa 1916.

The Rape of Owens Valley Continues

The City of Los Angeles, NOT the Inyo County Supervisors are to supply a water management plan for Owens Valley. This is like asking a thief and his assistants to install your burglar alarm.

Can the Supervisors of Inyo County be so naive to believe that the Department of Water and Power will do anything for the betterment of Owens Valley?

The DWP's "LAST DROP DOCTRINE" is already drying up the land of this once fertile, productive valley.

For 50 years this valley's citizens have tried to negotiate with the D.W.P. over the water and land use issue to no avail.

"THE D.W.P.'s ONLY RESPONSIBILITY IS TO SUPPLY WATER TO LOS ANGELES."

The D.W.P.'s policy is to take ALL THE WATER possible and in doing so, nothing will survive but SAGE BRUSH (maybe) and BLOW SAND.

THIS IS ENVIROMENTAL ENHANCEMENT?

While the Supervisors wait, the D.W.P. works. NEW WELLS ARE BEING DRILLED, canals, ditches, and streams are being deepened and widened, and the river is being channeled by use of maximum capacity of flowing water.

The recent proposed state legislation would exempt the City of Los Angeles from paying taxes to Inyo County, thereby allowing L.A. to be a semi-soverign monopoly.

Can you afford to pay twice the county taxes you are now paying?

Why have the Supervisors refused to pass and exercise control ordinances to protect the people and the land from the devastating policies of the D.W.P.?

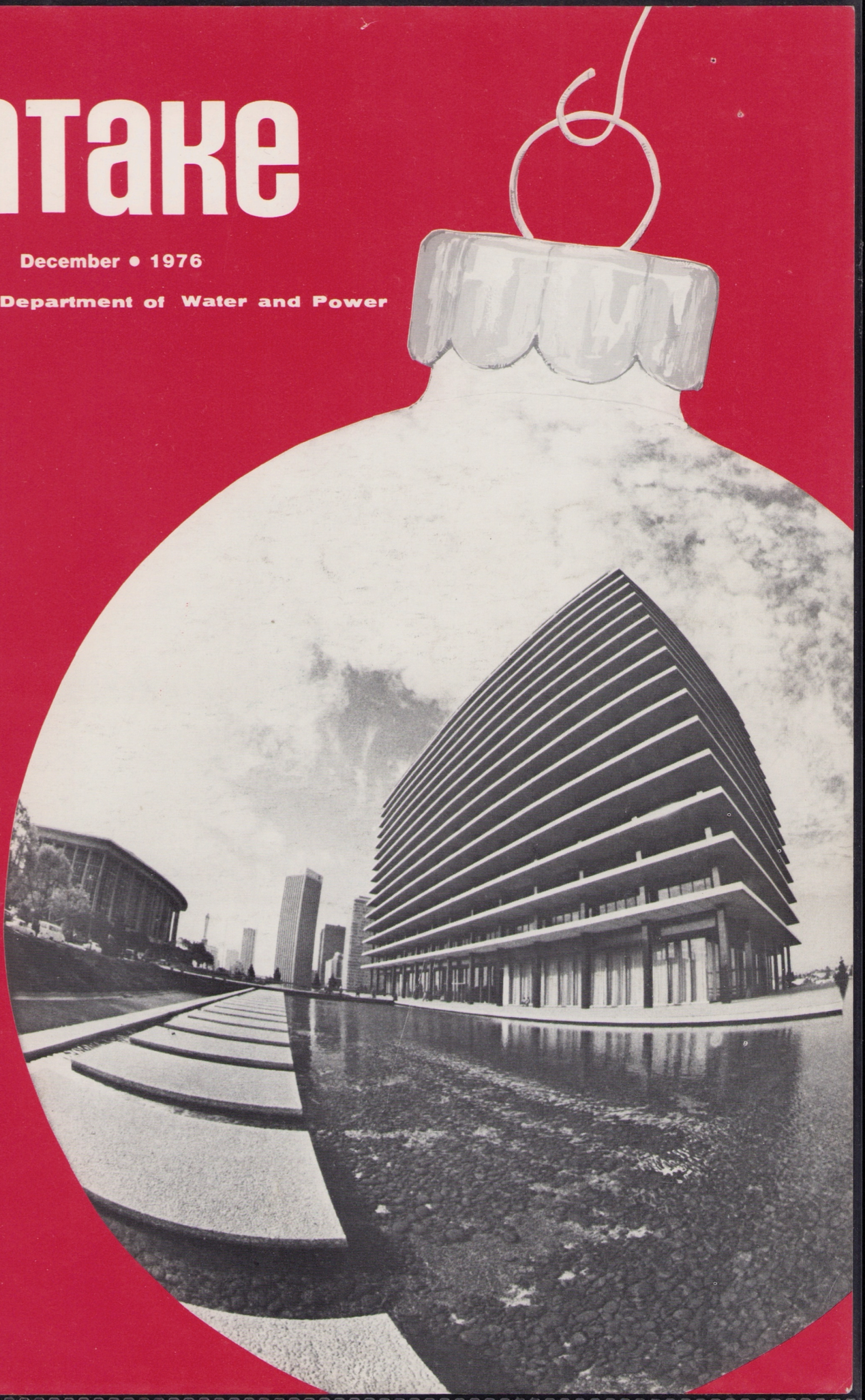
We the people do not desire to be a colony of the D.W.P., but wish to control our own destiny and the destiny of our county without the restraints of an outside corporation.

Concerned Citizens of Owens Valley
Box 942
Bishop, California 93514 1971

INTAKE

December • 1976

Los Angeles Department of Water and Power



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Steve Hinderer, director

Peter Odencrans
editor
Paul Klein
associate editor

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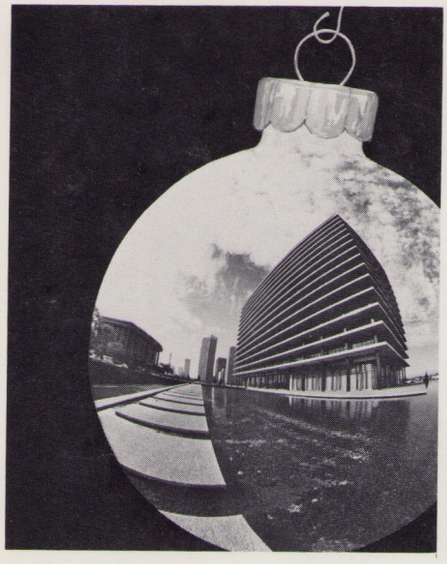
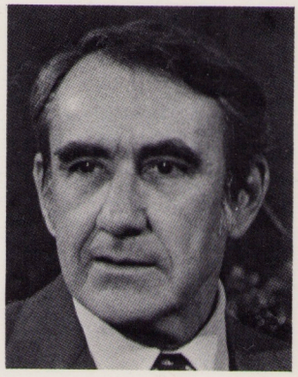
Southern California Business Communicators and the International Association of Business Communicators

COVERS



With distortion, the General Office Building looks much the way it would if seen through a holiday decoration ornament. The Intake Magazine staff and the entire Public Affairs Division hopes employees of all faiths will have an enjoyable holiday season. Front cover photo by Bill MacFarland; Back cover photo by Jimmy Coverly.



Drought intensifies historical controversy

by Louis H. Winnard
general manager and chief engineer

California's worst drought in 45 years and last month's (Sept. 15) dynamiting of the Alabama Gates on the Los Angeles Owens River Aqueduct have focused new attention on the slim, 338-mile lifeline that provides Los Angeles with 80 percent of its water.

Ever since William Mulholland completed the city's first aqueduct in 1913, the system has been both praised by those who recognized it not only as an engineering accomplishment unparalleled since ancient Rome, but also as the key to Los Angeles' existence as a modern metropolis. The system has been criticized by those who believe that the city stole the water from the Owens Valley, turning a once-verdant region into a desert.

This latter version of events is usually presented under a catchy heading: "The Rape of the Owens Valley." Actually, even a cursory review of the relationship betweeen Los Angeles and the valley will reveal how mistaken this view of history is. Consider these few highlights:

-The Owens Valley was never a lush agricultural region. Much of the valley floor, which receives less than six inches of rain a year, has always been largely desert.

-When Los Angeles first began to buy valley land in 1904, some of the initial purchases were indeed made by secret agents to prevent land speculation. However, more than three-quarters of all the land purchases were straightforward transactions between city representatives and valley residents who were fully cognizant of property values.

Concerned Residents

-In 1924, residents of the Owens Valley became concerned that additional land purchases by Los Angeles would reduce the value of parcels in private hands, including town properties. Some violence ensued and, in the end, Los Angeles agreed to buy not only the rural property of valley residents who wished to sell, but also parcels within the region's towns. As a result, the city owned more than 90 percent of the valley by the mid-1930s.

-In order to stabilize and support the local economy, the city leased back most of its properties to valley residents at favorable terms. Such land was mainly used for cattle grazing, which had always been the area's dominant agricultural activity.

-In 1940, the city gave the Owens Valley economy another boost by releasing surplus water to ranchers for the irrigation of alfalfa and other pasture crops.

-When the valley's business and civic leaders eventually requested that ownership of properties within town limits be returned to residents, Los Angeles complied. Today, city-

(Continued on page 15)

Winnard responds to Owens Valley critics

(Continued from page 2)

owned holdings within the region's towns are minimal. Moreover, Los Angeles now pays $4 million a year in Owens Valley property taxes— nearly half the amount collected in the area — yet requires few services.

-Los Angeles has also been working with the people of Inyo and Mono counties, the U.S. Forest Service and the California Department of Fish and Game to develop the valley's greatest asset— recreational land. Of the 307,000 acres of watershed now owned by the city, 240,000 acres have been leased to private interests for ranching and agriculture, with the stipulation that 75 percent of that land must be kept open to the public for fishing, hunting and other recreational pursuits.

Actually, to understand the most recent events one must go back to 1963, when the Los Angeles Board of Water and Power Commissiones authorized construction of a second, smaller aqueduct from the Owens Valley.

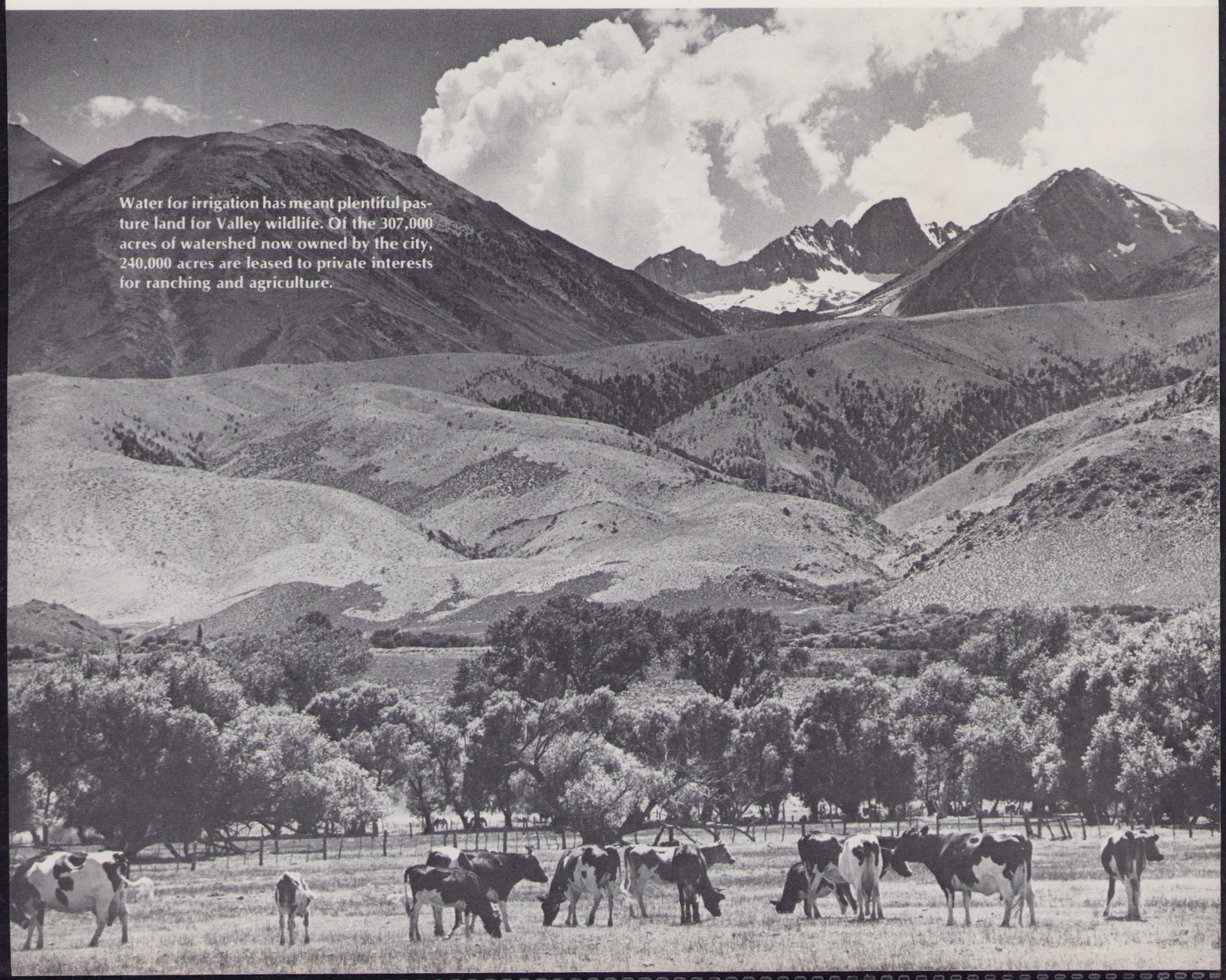
There were several reasons for that decsion:

First, Los Angeles had rights to more water in the Owens Valley-Mono Basin region than the existing aqueduct could carry; thus, when California lost Colorado River water to Arizona as the result of an adverse Supreme Court decision, it became necessary to obtain more water from the north.

Second, water from the Owens Valley was of better chemical quality than that from the Colorado River.

Third, the water from the second aqueduct would be less expensive than water from either the Colorado River or the state water project. Finally, the state had warned Los Angeles

(Continued on page 16)



Water for irrigation has meant plentiful pasture land for Valley wildlife. Of the 307,000 acres of watershed now owned by the city, 240,000 acres are leased to private interests for ranching and agriculture.

(Continued from page 15)
that if the Mono Basin water was not used, it could be made available to someone else.

Owens Valley Served

It is also important to note that the Department of Water and Power, beyond its obligation to Los Angeles water users, also serves many Owens Valley residents. For example, the city distributes enough water for irrigation and fish and wildlife purposes to support a population of 500,000. (The combined population of both Inyo and Mono Counties is 25,000.) However, the city does not own all of the valley's water as some critics claim; many local people did not sell out in earlier years, and the DWP does not interfere with their water supply.

Moreover, while the average daily consumption of water per person in Los Angeles is 180 gallons, it is approximately 1,000 gallons in Owens Valley towns served by DWP. The reason for this is obvious: Los Angeles customers are metered, and payment is based on use. But Owens Valley customers pay a flat fee regardless of how much water they consume. And yet DWP's current attempt to encourage water conservation by installing meters for the valley's nonresidential customers is being opposed in court by Inyo County.

In 1963, DWP agreed to rewrite leases to provide ground-water pumping for the irrigation of 15,000 acres of city-owned land for alfalfa and cattle raising. Studies had indicated that crop productivity could be maintained on less water if the ranchers would switch to sprinklers and modern irrigation methods. (The DWP helped ranchers convert by amortizing the cost of permanent sprinkler systems.)

DWP's goal in all this was to maintain the valley's level of agricultural productivity, while filling both aqueducts to their intended capacity of 666 cubic feet per second (cfs). To do so, the DWP found it would have to pump 89 cfs from the region's underground water table. This water, which is naturally stored underground, has been pumped by the city during dry cycles dating back to 1918.

But by 1970, when the second aqueduct was placed in service, several things had happened that the DWP had not anticipated in 1963. During the intervening years, the city had agreed to irrigate an additional 4,000 acres of pasture land and to make water available for recreation, for fish and wildlife enhancement projects and for the expansion of two fish hatcheries.

When the amounts of water were added up, the DWP had to increase its pumping from the originally planned 89 cfs to 140 cfs. The difference of 51 cfs was needed to meet additional Owens Valley needs. The amount of water exported to Los Angeles since completion of the second aqueduct in June 1970 has not exceeded what was anticipated in 1963.

Fish hatcheries supply Eastern Sierra lakes and streams with a plentiful stock of fish.

More than 400 of these protected Tule Elk roam on federal and city lands. A viewpoint on Department land south to Big Pine overlooks an area frequented by the dwarf elks. A 20-acre field of city land just north of the viewpoint is leased to provide habitat and alfalfa forage for the elk in this area.

The California Environmental Quality Act was passed in November 1970, and Inyo County officials cited the new law in 1972, when they filed suit against the increased pumping. Still in the courts, this suit alleges the pumped water is going to Los Angeles and, unless the removal of underground water is stopped, native plants and wildlife— as well as the entire valley's agricultural— will be severely damaged.

The first charge is untrue, since the additional pumped water benefits the the Owens Valley.

The second charge represents a gross exaggeration. The irrigated agricultural land leased from the city, including the new 4,000 acres, will not be affected, except in years of severe drought when the city would also be similarly affected. Moreover, studies indicate that, at most, 22 percent of the native shrubs and grasses in the areas where groundwater is less than 15 feet from the surface would be gradually affected over a long time span. (This is about 1.5 percent of the total Owens River watershed.)

In fact, Los Angeles has been pumping from its wells ever since the second aqueduct went into operation six years ago, and there has been little documented change in the valley that could be attributable to the pumping.

Even so, Inyo County officials have argued that Los Angeles should decrease its water exports from the Owens Valley and substitute water from other sources. The ramifications of such a move would extend beyond the Owens Valley, since the Los Angeles aqueduct is the only system bringing water into Southern California that produces electricity instead of consuming it.

Savings in Oil

If the electricty produced by the hydroelectric plants along the aqueduct system were to be replaced by power from plants using fossil fuels, approximately 2 million barrels of oil a year would have to be burned in the South Coast Air Basin. In addition, the alternative water supply, which would come from the California Aqueduct, would have to be pumped with electricity. Supplying that power would require burning another 2.5 million barrels of oil per year, about half of it in the South Coast Air Basin. Thus, if Inyo County officials have their way, not only will Los Angeles be deprived of an important source of vital water, but all of Southern California will also suffer a reduction in air quality.

An objective appraisal of the historical evidence clearly shows that the Owens Valley has been preserved and protected by the city of Los Angeles.

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Los Angeles Is Draining Once-Verdant Owens Valley

THE WASHINGTON POST
Wednesday, September 8, 1976

By Joel Kotkin
Special to The Washington Post

BISHOP, Calif., Sept. 7—Growing up on her father's alfalfa ranch in the early 1920s, Enid Larsen remembers the Owens Valley as an oasis between the mountains, with broad fields of grain and groves of fruit trees. The dry land, settled by her grandfather in the 1870s, bloomed as farmers tapped the melting snows from the surrounding Sierra and Inyo mountains.

Today the Owens Valley is a mostly dry, dusty place littered with the remnants of deserted homesteads. The water supply, key to its former fertility, has been largely diverted to serve the needs of Los Angeles, the vast metropolis 300 miles to the south.

Like many in the valley, Larsen blames the city's Department of Water and Power for ruining her area's environment by siphoning off the water once used by farmers and ranchers. "This used to be a green valley," the 71-year-old Owens Valley biologist recalls. "But the city, they've burnt this place up."

The conflict has been going on since the city began acquiring water rights here in 1905. Aqueducts completed in 1913 and 1970 supply 78 per cent of the water and 8 per cent of the electricity for the city of nearly 3 million.

In 1924 violence erupted as Owens Valley farmers, armed with shotguns, sat atop the city's water gates and blew up the aqueduct 17 times. The state militia expelled the locals and reasserted Los Angeles' firm control over the valley and its water.

Although the city owns almost all the land along the 120-mile valley floor, the conflict continues. Since 1973 Inyo County, most of whose 19,000 residents live in Owens Valley, have been pressing a lawsuit to halt the city's plans to increase groundwater pumping in the valley area.

The groundwater pumping was increased dramatically during the 1960s as city engineers prepared to fill up their second aqueduct. Now the city wants to increase the pumping to a maximum of 315 cubic feet per second. The county is seeking to hold the pumping to a maximum 89.

Last month, a state appeals court in Sacramento forced the city to reduce its annual pumping rate from 178.5 to 149.56 cubic feet per second. But the ruling is only temporary, while a major court battle over the environmental impact of the pumping awaits final decision.

Officials at the Department of Water and Power maintain that the increased pumping is designed to meet the needs of Owens Valley's 15,000 people as well as to fill the requirements of Los Angeles. They also justify increased pumping by pointing to costs and energy savings to their consumers.

Dwayne Georgeson, the aqueduct chief engineer, says pumping water out of Owens Valley is vastly preferable to obtaining available supplies from the California State Aqueduct, a state-owned irrigation project that runs through most of the San Joaquin Valley. Because Owens Valley water is cheaper and produces hydroelectric energy through eight dams, Georgeson says restrictions on pumping as sought by Inyo County would increase annual costs to Los Angeles by $10 million, causing an approximate 10 per cent rise in rate payers bills.

But to many in the Owens Valley, the savings to Los Angeles are far outweighed by the possible economic and environmental fallout.

Inyo County District Attorney H. L. (Buck) Gibbons is challenging the city's environmental impact statement on the groundwater pumping as inadequate. He says the city is lying to the people of Owens Valley by saying the pumping is largely designed to meet local needs.

"The Department of Water and Power's record is very shabby," says Gibbons. "The degree of lying and deception is appalling. If the water was for us, do you think we would be fighting it?"

According to Gibbons and other Inyo County officials, the city's only interest in the Owens Valley is as a "water pond" to serve the energy and water needs of the metropolis.

"Colonial is too nice a word for the way they treat us," Gibbons says. "You know, if you go back to our predecessors on the East Coast, at least they were told they were colonists. The Department of Water and Power treats us like colonists, but they won't admit it."

Gibbons and others fear that groundwater pumping is only a first step toward ejecting agriculture completely from the valley. Inyo County Administrator John Smith, a rancher who leases land and irrigation rights from the city, says that since the 1920s irrigated city lands have declined from 50,000 acres to 11,000 acres.

"The city has very little interest in cattlemen," Smith says. "If it comes to a question between the cattlemen and getting water to the people of Los Angeles, they will kill off all the cattlemen. That's the trend of the last 50 years."

In this drought year, the worst since 1931, the city has reduced by 50 per cent its supply of water to cattlemen and farmers with irrigation leases. The groundwater pumping proposals have exacerbated fears of further cuts because most of the ranchland is unirrigated and depends entirely on groundwater.

Ronald (Sandy) Kemp, whose 50,000-acre cattle ranch is largely unirrigated, fears the groundwater pumping may ultimately kill 50 per cent of his grasslands by lowering the water table below the roots.

"If the city pumps as much as they want to, it could spell a lot of trouble" Kemp says. But the rancher is pessimistic about being able to stop the pumping since it serves the interest of millions in Los Angeles. "In a moral sense, maybe they shouldn't do it — but whoever heard about morals in the last 15 years?" Kemp asks.

Some observers, citing the plot of the movie "Chinatown," say Los Angeles business interests want the valley water to promote development schemes.

"The plot of Chinatown is not that far from reality," says Peter Marcuse, former chairman of the Los Angeles City Planning Commission. "The relationship between the business community and the Department of Water and Power is extremely close."

While denying any collusion with the city, business leaders acknowledge the extreme importance of the project to the city's economy. "Water is absolutely vital to this area," says Conrad Jamison, vice president and urban economist for Security National Bank in Los Angeles. "We would blow away and die without this important water."

But while the urban dwellers have their environmental and economic concerns, some Owens Valley residents believe the city is destroying their relatively pristine environment to make up for the excesses of Los Angeles.

Lawrence Odel, director of the Great Basin Air Pollution Control District here in Bishop, says increased groundwater pumping will severely affect at least 22 per cent of the valley's vegetation, freeing large amounts of alkaline dust into the air. Odel reports that outlying dust, a particulate smog dangerous to both man and plant life, is already reaching up into the High Sierras 10,000 feet above the 4,000-foot Owens Valley floor.

Mary Dedecker, a local botanist and consultant to the Department of Water and Power, is concerned that if the valley ground cover is further destroyed, alkaline dust could permanently damage even the bristle cone pines in the Inyo National Forest, the oldest living things on earth. Some are older than 4,000 years.

By stressing these environmental effects, some Owens Valley residents believe they could force the city to cut back its plans. "There's enough water here for all of us, if compassion is used," said Enid Larsen. "The city has just got to stop feeling the water is all theirs."

WATER AND POWER

William Kahrl's WATER AND POWER is an incisive history of the conflict over Los Angeles' water supply in the Owens Valley. The book, published by University of California Press, offers new insights into many facets of the still-controversial subject. By special arrangement, SIERRA LIFE presents a series of excerpts from this brilliant retelling of the story.

Los Angeles Department of Water & Power photo

William Mulholland, head of the Los Angeles water department, was the heart and soul of the Owens Valley Aqueduct plan. He dominated the city's water policies for decades.

When William E. Smythe, first executive secretary of the National Irrigation Congress, editor of *Irrigation Age*, and author of the seminal history of the American reclamation movement, *The Conquest of Arid America*, surveyed the prospects for economic development in California in 1900, he saw no future for Los Angeles and the other communities of the South Coast. . . Instead, he looked to the eastern slope of the Sierra Nevada—to what he called the Undiscovered California, Plumas, Lassen, and Modoc counties in the north and the Owens Valley in the south—as the areas holding special promise for the state's future economic growth.

Smythe argued that these emerging communities, although isolated during the nineteenth century by the absence of railroad facilities connecting them to the major cities of the coast, "present today the finest field for development in California and one of the finest in the United States. There can be no question that during the next century they will become the homes of hundreds of thousands of people and the seat of a manifold industrial life." His confidence was founded on the abundant water resources these areas naturally possessed. His optimism with regard to the Owens Valley in particular was shared by other western advocates of systematic irrigation and by the federal engineers responsible for expanding agricultural development of the West under the aegis of the newly formed United States Reclamation Service. But in Los Angeles, William Mulholland looked to the water riches of the Owens Valley and drew an altogether different conclusion, one which would set him on a course in direct conflict with the public forces then gathering to aid the economic development of the valley.

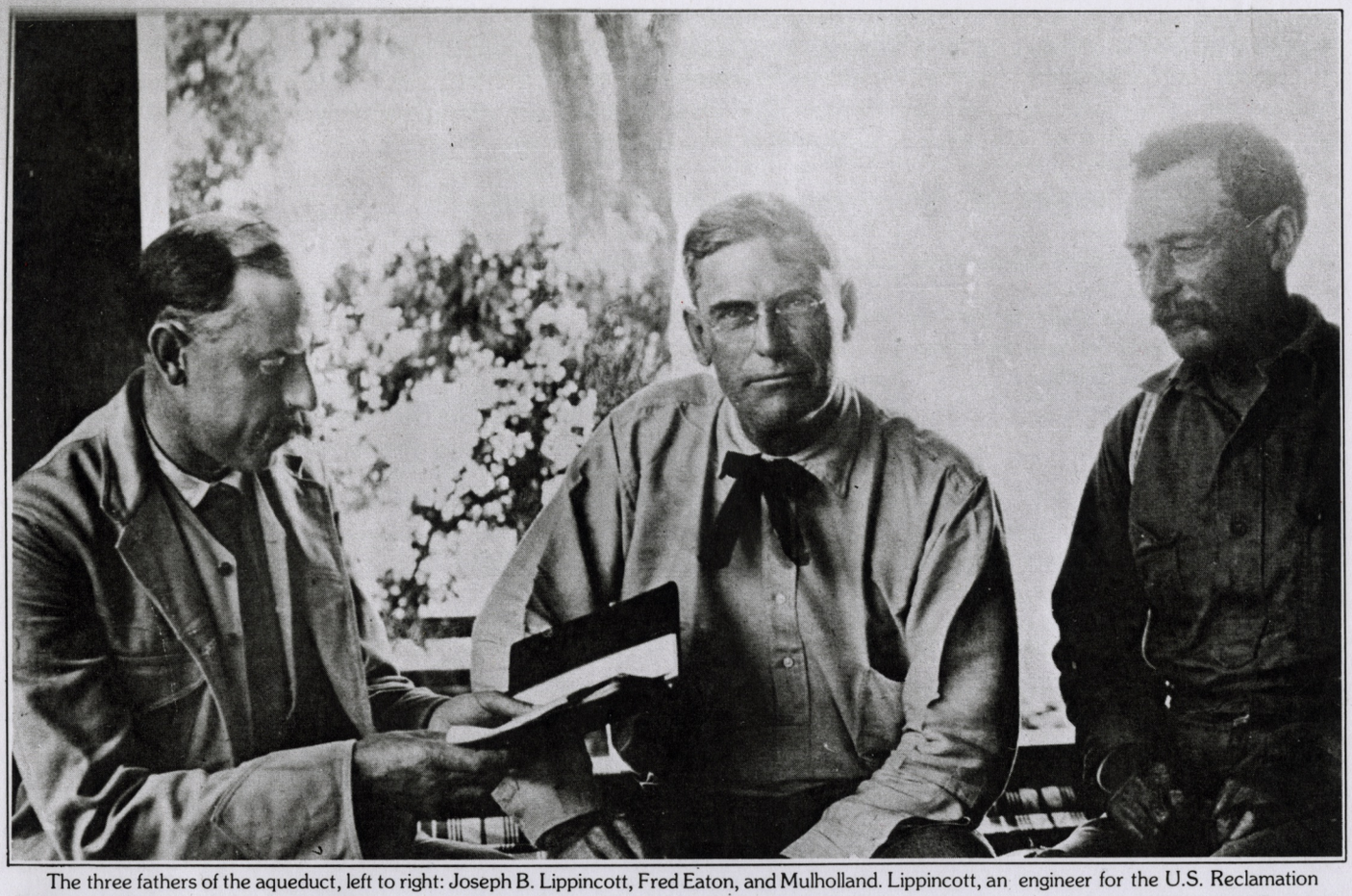
Photo courtesy of the Eastern California Museum, the Ramsey collection

The (Owens) Valley is a narrow graben, approximately 100 miles long and an average of 5 miles wide, confined on the east by the Inyo-White Mountains and on the west by the Sierra Nevada, which rises above the valley's floor. More than one and a half million years ago, when the vast granite blocks that form the modern Sierra Nevada first pressed upward, they carried the valley with them, lifting it to an elevation of nine thousand feet before it broke away and fell back to its present level. As they subsided, the blocks forming the valley's floor twisted together, sealing the basin and closing its lower-lying southern end with pinched

The Alabama Gates (above) were later seized by angry Owens Valley ranchers. *Los Angeles Department of Water & Power photo*

bedrock. When particles of rock and soil were washed down the mountainsides in the thousands of centuries that followed, they were consequently captured in this watertight basin, forming alluvial fans of granitic soil which eventually covered over 275 square miles of the area between Owens Lake and the present site of Bishop. The mountains are thus the source of all the valley's richness, for they have provided both the soil that fills the valley today and the water to make it fertile. . .

Although white trappers and explorers had passed through the Owens Valley as early as 1833, there was no detailed written account of what they found there until 1859. In July of that year, Capt. J.W. Davidson entered the valley with a military column sent out from Fort Tejon to investigate charges that the Paiutes had been rustling cattle in the Santa Clara and San Fernando valleys. Proceeding north from Owens Lake, Davidson followed a river averaging fifty feet in width and running fifteen to twenty feet deep. "Every step now taken shows you that nature has been lavish of her stores," Davidson wrote. "The mountains are filled with timber, the vallies with water and meadows of luxuriant grass. Some of these meadows contain, at a moderate estimate, ten thousand acres, every foot of which can be irrigated." North of Oak Creek he noted, "Wherever water touches it, it produces abundantly. I should think it well suited to the growth of wheat, barley, oats, rye and various fruits, the apple, pear, etc. . . . To the Grazier, this is one of the finest parts of the State; to the Farmer, it offers every advantage but a market."



The three fathers of the aqueduct, left to right: Joseph B. Lippincott, Fred Eaton, and Mulholland. Lippincott, an engineer for the U.S. Reclamation Service, used his position to further the city's plan. *Photo courtesy of the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power*

(Fred) Eaton's advocacy of (the Los Angeles water system) had been tied to a scheme of his own to bring the waters of the Owens Valley to Los Angeles. This was an idea he had borrowed from two private surveys performed in 1885 and 1891 which had shown it would be technically possible to construct a canal running 235 miles between the two regions in which water would flow entirely by gravity. Eaton had been promoting the idea with Mulholland and anyone else who would listen since 1892, but no one had paid much attention. Although the Reclamation Service had heard of the scheme, officials in Washington dismissed it as just another of the dozens of plans for bringing water to Los Angeles—"most of them chimerical"—that self-proclaimed experts in the South Coast had been producing for years. "Almost every possible or impossible solution for the water problem had been brought to the attention of the Geological Survey or the Reclamation Service at one time or another," wrote (the Service's) Arthur Powell Davis. . . Although Davis acknowledged that the survey's experts had examined Eaton's plan "in a more or less desultory way," he noted that "on the face of it, such a project is as likely as the City of Washington tapping the Ohio River. . ."

(Eaton) persuaded his former protege Mulholland to return with him to the Owens Valley so that Mulholland could at least look over the resources of the area before it was too late and the water was committed to agriculture. Mulholland by this time had completed his studies of alternative water supplies the city might secure within its immediate area, and the results had not been encouraging. After examining the prospects for tapping Piru Creek in Ventura County and the Kern, Santa Ana, Mojave, and San Luis Rey rivers, Mulholland had concluded that all were either too small or already tied down by preexisting water rights claims to augment the water department's efforts to supply the city's growing population. He agreed, therefore, to examine Eaton's proposal, which he had dismissed many times before.

It became a standing joke among the work crews along the line of the aqueduct in later years that they could trace the path Eaton and Mulholland had cut across the desert by following the trail of empty liquor bottles the two men left in their wake.

Together the two men set out for the Owens Valley by buckboard, traveling in secret and camping out along the way. The trip was not all hardship, though: it became a standing joke among the work crews along the line of the aqueduct in later years that they could trace the path Eaton and Mulholland had cut across the desert by following the trail of empty liquor bottles the two men left in their wake. Once in the valley, Eaton was successful in convincing Mulholland

that here lay a water supply capable of supporting a population of two million—ten times the number of people Los Angeles then contained. Mulholland returned to the city to confer with the members of the municipal water board while Eaton headed East to consult with Dillon and Hubbard, bond attorneys in New York, in a last fruitless attempt to form a private consortium to buy up water rights in the Owens Valley.

Mulholland ultimately resorted to exaggerations of the city's need for water as a way of encouraging voters to approve his bonds (for the aqueduct), and, in the weeks before the election, the *(Los Angeles) Times* began to print almost daily predictions of the dire consequences which would be visited on Los Angeles if the aqueduct were not built. One of the most enduring stories fabricated as part of this scare campaign involved the so-called drought which descended on Southern California at a time variously cited as 1892 or 1895 and which reportedly persisted until 1904. Modern historians still refer to this drought even though it seems to have originated with Mulholland in the election of 1905. For example, Erwin Cooper's *Aqueduct Empire* recalls on Mulholland's authority that the average rainfall in Los Angeles from 1895 to 1904 dropped to only six inches per year; in fact, National Weather Bureau records reveal that Los Angeles' annual precipitation in this period averaged 11.52 inches. Similarly, Remi Nadeau in his history of the Los Angeles aqueduct reports that Mulholland first traveled to the Owens Valley in September 1904 because that summer's "water famine" had set the city "reeling." In fact, Los Angeles in 1904 received a perfectly average rainfall of 11.88 inches and in August experienced a record downpour for that month which was not even approached in the entire forty-year period from 1891 to 1930.

Mary Austin was the wife of Stafford Wallace Austin, the register of federal lands in Independence. . . As an author, she had established for herself a stature far surpassing that of her husband. The appearance in 1903 of her *Land of Little Rain*, a collection of word sketches of life on the high desert lands of the Owens Valley, had won her wide acclaim in Europe and America and established her reputation as a major figure on the American literary scene. Articulate, imperious, and extraordinarily gifted, she became, in Carl Van Doren's words, a "matriarch in a desert" who "had again more mind than her daily existence could occupy. It was the surplus which made her poet and

prophet. . . The desert put its mark on her. . . Her desert knowledge ripened to a wisdom that formed and colored all her later experience. . . Her books were wells driven into America to bring up water for her countrymen, though they might not have realized their thirst." Seeing the valley threatened by Los Angeles' plans in 1905, she joined her husband in leading a defense of the country where her talents had matured. . .

Modest, intellectual, gentlemanly, and ineffectually ambitious, Wallace brought Mary to Lone Pine in 1896, where he and his brother hoped to found an irrigation colony. "Mary at 26 was far too desperately displaced from the true center of her being not to feel obliged to go somewhere." The project was a total failure, and the couple was turned out of the hotel where they were living, even though Mary was by then carrying a child. Wallace found a cabin near George's Creek, and there the baby, Ruth, was born retarded. Mary, her health failing, fled first to Bishop, where she taught at the private Inyo Academy, and then to Los Angeles, where she worked with (Los Angeles city librarian Charles) Lummis.

When Wallace obtained his appointment at the land office in Independence she joined him once again, and it was here that her writing skill began to blossom. . . With her affection for the Indians, her often distracted manner, and her liberal enthusiasm for women's suffrage, free silver, and juvenile court reform, she seems never to have fit in well with the more conventional white farming families who were settling the Owens Valley in increasing numbers by the turn of the century. Many of the neighboring wives later recalled with horror rushing to Mary's house at night after hearing Ruth cry for hours, only to find the child strapped into a chair screaming while her mother paced the floor, hair streaming down her back, composing some new bit of writing.

Life in the Owens Valley was rapidly changing in those years. "With the slow decline of mining, agricultural possiblities came to the fore. . . and there between the old era and the new the Valley hung," she later wrote. Everyone who came there seemed filled with an expectation of impending

Mary Austin first called public attention to the Owens Valley's objection to the city's project. ' God, that woman is the only one who has brains enough to see where this is going," Mulholland s

prosperity. "This was an attitude prevailing among men of Inyo; one on which they constantly reassured one another. *Something* was due to happen soon," she observed. "Once they had exposed themselves to it, they spent their lives going around and around in it, always keyed to the expected, the releasing discovery." Wallace Austin had certainly been infected by this spirit, and it seems to have deepened the gulf between them. The more time she spent walking in the desert and writing about what she found there, the further apart they became. . .

And so, when the occasion arose to make a common cause with Wallace against Los Angeles' aqueduct, threw herself into the effort, perha much to save her marriage a preserve the Owens Valley. She to Los Angeles, where she intervie Mulholland and came away with conviction that, despite protestations to the contr construction of the aqueduct w mean the end of all the dreams Wa and the other men of Inyo nurture a future of prosperity and growth i valley. "By God, that woman is the one who has brains enough to where this is going!" Mulhol exclaimed after she had gone. poured all of her findings

convictions into a long article for the *San Francisco Chronicle* denouncing the Reclamation Service for its assistance to Los Angeles:

"Every considerable city in the State is or is about to be confronted by a water problem. But what is to be gained by the commonwealth if it robs Peter to pay Paul? Is all this worthwhile in order that Los Angeles should be just so big?. . . It is worthwhile for other cities to consider that as this case proceeds their own water problems are likely to be shaped by it more or less. Shall the question of domestic water in California be determined by craft and graft and bitterness and long-drawn wasteful struggles, or conducted with rightness and dignity to an equal conclusion?. . . Heaven send in the interests of decent government that they will not make good the boast of the promoters (of the aqueduct) to have their private ears. In a republic, government is not supposed to have a private ear."

In keeping with the attitude (Wallace) Austin had first enunciated, (congressman for Inyo County Sylvester C.) Smith acknowledged Los Angeles' need for an additional domestic water supply. It was on the question of using the surplus waters from the aqueduct for agriculture in the San Fernando Valley that Smith's concerns with the bill were directed. He argued that until the city had grown to the point where it could use all the water its aqueduct would provide for domestic purposes, the excess water would be better used irrigating public lands in the Owens Valley rather than benefiting private interests in Los Angeles. Smith therefore proposed a compromise in the form of an amendment to the bill which would enable the Reclamation Service to proceed with its irrigation project for the valley. Under the terms of the amendment, the Owens Valley would have first claim to its own water supply. Any water left over after the valley's needs had been met could be diverted to Los Angeles, but only to serve the city's domestic needs. And any excess water the city could not use would revert to the valley's control. . .

Mulholland traveled to Washington to meet the challenge. The predominating influence of the local business community in Los Angeles' public affairs in general and the aqueduct in particular was evident in the fact that he took with him, in addition to the city attorney, the president of the Los Angeles Chamber of Commerce and the chairman of the chamber's investigating committee, which had endorsed the aqueduct in the critical closing days of the bond election. Finding that Smith's proposal enjoyed the support of the Secretary of the Interior, Mulholland initially agreed to accept the amendment in a meeting he had with Smith and (California Senator Frank) Flint on June 21, 1906. Senator Flint, however, was not so ready to concede defeat, and he turned for assistance to President Roosevelt's close personal friend and chief of the Forest Service, Gifford Pinchot. On the night of June 23, Flint obtained an audience with Roosevelt, and with Pinchot's help he succeeded in convincing Roosevelt to oppose the Smith compromise. Hitchcock and Smith did not learn of this turn of events until June 25, when Roosevelt, despite their strenuous protests, sent a formal request to the House Public Lands Committee asking that the Smith amendment be removed. The committee reported Flint's bill out the next day drawn according to the president's instructions, and the House promptly approved. On June 28, five days after Flint's first late-night call, the bill went to the president's desk for signature.

Roosevelt's decision to side with Los Angeles and the special interests which stood to profit from the city's scheme to exploit the water of a small agricultural community would seem to mark a significant lapse in policy for a president who is remembered today as a trustbuster, friend of the little man, and early champion of the modern conservation movement.

At first, there was some concern that the city would never be able to find enough skilled workers to construct the project. A fortuitous financial panic originating in the eastern markets in October 1907, however, brought about the closure of scores of mining operations in the western states just as construction on the aqueduct was getting under way. As a result, more than four thousand trained tunnelers and diggers from the gold fields of California, Nevada, and Colorado suddenly became available. Some were over fifty years old and had worked the original Comstock Lode. Nevertheless, anyone who needed a job found a welcome on the aqueduct, which operated under special provisions waiving the city's usual civil service requirements for all but supervisory positions. Americans of Greek, Austrian, Serbian, Montenegran, Hungarian, and Italian extraction made up the labor force. Japanese and Chinese workers were rare. Most numerous of all the ethnic groups were Irish-Americans, who arrived in dungarees held up with a bit of fuse tied for a belt, hobnailed boots, and derby hats which could absorb the impact of a falling rock in this age before the introduction of hard hats.

The conditions under which these men worked were demanding in the extreme. Temperatures in the desert ranged from 10 degrees Fahrenheit at night to more than 110 during the day. Those who chose to work in the tunnels, where the temperature remained constant, faced the constant danger of falling rock and cave-ins. With the exception of the cement plant at Monolith, where the city employed 250 men, the buildings in the camps did little to protect workers from the elements. Most structures were built of wood and canvas so that they could be moved easily; only the equipment storage sheds merited corrugated iron. Insulation was rare and refrigeration altogether unknown. The meat in the commissaries was usually rotten and maggot-ridden, and eggs and cheese arrived in an inedible condition.

The Los Angeles Young Men's Christian Association did its best to lighten the worker's lot with regular shipments of books, magazines, games, movies, and bags of candy sent to the club rooms it established in the work camps. Nevertheless, few men could stand exposure to these conditions for long. As a result, the work force was constantly fluctuating. As many as one

The intake to the aqueduct *Los Angeles Department of Water & Power photo*

hundred thousand men worked on the aqueduct, but the labor force never numbered more than six thousand at a time, and three thousand was the average. A general exodus from the camps occurred each summer as the men fled the Mojave Desert to find work in the Northwest or on the other side of the Sierra; when winter returned, the aqueduct labor force swelled again. For shorter respites, each man would save up a small stake of cash and head for Los Angeles; few got past the saloons that sprang up in the towns of Cinco and Mojave, however, and alcoholism became an acute problem in the camps at the southern end of the project.

Health and sanitary conditions were primitive, though no worse than was customary for the period. The hundreds of men working the Saugus Division, for example, had only one bathtub among them, and when it wore out from constant use it was not replaced. All employees contributed to the cost of medical care. If a worker was injured but did not require hospitalization, he was allowed to return to work once he signed a release absolving the city of Los Angeles of any liability for subsequent complications. Those who did go into the camp hospitals received no pay at all unless they signed similar waivers, in which case they were provided with free board and half pay. Settlements for the survivors of men killed on the project were rarely paid and never generous. Of the forty-three deaths that occurred during construction of the aqueduct, only eight resulted in the payment of benefits to survivors. The total paid to these eight families was no more than $3,928, and only three of the eight received cash settlements greater than $500. The city of Los Angeles did contribute $75 automatically toward the burial expenses of anyone killed on the project. . .

Sheriff Charles A. Collins warned that if two men were indicted, two hundred would step forward to stand with them. Governor Richardson urged Collins to demonstrate his "manhood and courage."

On November 16, (1924, the Owens Valley ranchers seized) the Alabama Gates, which control the main flow of water into the aqueduct. The gates were shut and the water sent spilling back into the river bed. Mark Watterson, who led the assault, was joined at the gates over the next four days by crowds of five hundred to eight hundred valley residents. It was a festive event. Businesses throughout the valley closed as shopowners left to join their friends at the aqueduct. Families came with picnic lunches. And the movie star Tom Mix, who was shooting a film nearby, sent over an orchestra.

Local law enforcement authorities were powerless to intervene. When Los Angeles demanded that the leaders of the insurrection be arrested, Sheriff Charles A. Collins warned that if two men were indicted, two hundred would step forward to stand with them. Instead Collins called upon Governor Friend W. Richardson to send in state troops, arguing that guardsmen were the only authority the unarmed mob would be likely to obey. Richardson demurred and urged Collins instead to demonstrate his "manhood and courage.

The pressure on the city was immense. News reports of events at the Alabama Gates were reprinted around the world. The judge sitting in Mulholland's suit to block the ranchers' diversions withdrew, declaring that he could no longer take an objective and dispassionate view of the city's case. The Los Angeles papers at first denounced the Wattersons as mobsters and printed false stories linking them with the Ku Klux Klan which even their own correspondents denounced. But they were alone in their defense of Mulholland's policy. "If the people of Los Angeles knew what their political agents were doing in Owens Valley they would be fired," declared Harry Glasscock in a statement that gained wide circulation.

On November 18, the *Los Angeles Times* deserted Mulholland in an editorial noting that the ranchers were not anarchists but honest citizens of the hardy stock of pioneers who had made California great: "They have put themselves hopelessly in the wrong by

Theodore Roosevelt talks to Gifford Pinchot, head of the U.S. Forest Service. Pinchot helped convince Roosevelt to side with Los Angeles against the Owens Valley.

Forest Service Photo Collection, National Agricultural Library

How Los Angeles' Water District Was 1st Formed

1957

Editor's Note: This is Part 4 of a series of six weekly news articles from St. Sen. F. Presley Abshire on California's water problem and the facts behind the issues being debated in the State Legislature. This article tells of the political methods by which the City of Los Angeles acquired the water of Owens Valley, and why the Owens Valley tragedy could have been avoided.

On California's eastern Sierra lies Owens Valley. Protected by tall, snowy Sierra peaks to the west and the Inyo and White Mountains to the east, it is about 65 miles long and 10 miles wide. An elevated 20 square mile meadow, called Long Valley, overlooks it from the north and a natural lake basin forms the southern end. Throughout the valley's length runs the Owens River—a permanent supply of pure, fresh water.

Prior to 1927—30 years ago—Owens Valley, settled by pioneers in 1861, produced prize-winning apples, hard grain, alfalfa and honey. It was truly a land of milk and honey, as beautiful a pastoral valley as California ever possessed.

SINCE 1927 Owens Valley returned to a desert. Save for two small ranches, all others have been deprived of water and the valley left to die.

Why?

Let Will Rogers explain, as he did in his syndicated column appearing in the New York Times of August 26, 1932:

"Bishop, Cal., Aug. 25 — Ten years ago this was a wonderful valley with one-quarter of a million acres of fruit and alfalfa. But, Los Angeles had to have more water for the Chamber of Commerce to drink more toasts to its growth, more water to dilute its orange juice and more water for its geraniums to delight the tourists, while the giant cottonwoods here died. So, now, this is a valley of desolation."

Owens Valley, center of this man-made catastrophe, has been called "the valley of broken hearts." With good reason. As one uprooted settler expressed himself in the Inyo Independent in the early thirties, "It is not the loss of the home, or the garden . . . or the growing business which has been the test, it's the loss of the years, and the hope and the endeavor . . ."

So, from "loss of the years, and the hope and the endeavor," bitterness and deep resentment remain in Owens Valley today. The story of how Los Angeles took their water is told and retold.

OUTSIDE OBSERVERS, from Will Rogers on, have written of the Owens Valley tragedy. Some pointed to the Los Angeles grab of Owens River water as a project "conceived in iniquity," others called it crass and stupid.

. . . In 1903, Owens Valley citizens planned a canal parallel to the river whereby water supplies would be dispersed more widely and more land would be put under cultivation. But J. B. Lippincott, chief engineer of the U.S. Reclamation Service, appeared in Owens Valley and persuaded the ranchers to yield their project and their individual water rights in favor of a federal reclamation project.

They did so in good faith. Fred Eaton, former Mayor of Los Angeles, represented himself as Lippincott's agent to acquire options on the majority of the valley's riparian water rights, "checkerboarding" ranch properties along the river and the irrigation canals. Lippincott, meanwhile, surveyed the valley from end to end.

Then the trap was sprung.

EATON EXERCISED his options and bought the land and the water rights. Lippincott announced the government had abandoned its "reclamation project," resigned his post, and jumped, survey reports and all, into the waiting arms of the Los Angeles Water Department, in whose secret employ he had been all along. And the Los Angeles Times broke a three-page story proclaming the city's new water supply—actually San Fernando Valley's new water supply.

Subsequent episodes in this tragedy included the City's successful move to have the valley declared a "national forest" (to prevent further homesteading), when the only trees around were the settler-planted cottonwoods; blocking canal intakes and dynamiting storage dams by City agents to get water for the aqueduct, a pattern ("shooting the duck") used later by the valley residents to protest their grievances.

Instead of building a reservoir at Long Valley to capture enough water supply for both Owens Valley and Los Angeles, the City's water department simply stuck one end of the aqueduct into Owens River and took the water to irrigate San Fernando Valley, 230 miles distant.

W. A. Chalfant, editor of the Inyo Register, wrote in his book, The Story of Inyo: "With adequate storage of flood waters (Long Valley reservoir, not built until 1941) there would have been little occasion for interference with the streams that were the very life-blood of Owens Valley; there would have been no destruction of homes and farms; Owens Valley towns would have continued to grow; there would have been water for all; millions of dollars would have been saved to the city; and Los Angeles would not have created for itself a repute that generations may not forget."

THE CITY OF LOS ANGELES not only acquired rights to flowing water in Owens Valley but it also pumped out the subsurface water supply. As late as 1945, Owens Valley water so saturated San Fernando Valley storage basins, both surface and sub-surface, that it appeared as standing water in many places. In face of pleas from Owens Valley for more of their own water, the City of Los Angeles installed pumps and wasted the water down the Los Angeles River into the ocean.

Owens Valley people charge the City of Los Angeles is flatly opposed to any population increase in their valley; that they cannot sink a water well without City permission; that some areas of the valley are still without electricity; that from their own water they are only allowed "surplus" electricity subject to the "paramount right" of the City of Los Angeles; and the City of Los Angeles has continually evaded its proper tax responsibilities in Inyo and Mono counties.

When their supplications and entreaties for more water and more electricity were met with refusal by the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power, one sardonic solution was proposed not less than two years ago by a county supervisor — "Kindly change the law and include the Inyo-Mono territory within the limits of the City of Los Angeles."

"Historic Legends of Inyo County" 1976

Fifty-two mule teams were used to haul supplies for the aqueduct.
--Courtesy L.A. Light and Power.

THE OWENS VALLEY WATER WAR

A resident of the Owens Valley is once reported to have said, in anger and disgust:

"What in Hell do the people of Los Angeles want with all our water. Few of them drink it and even less bathe in it."

His words expressed the anger and frustration of the residents of the valley at the tactics employed by a group of promoters in gaining the rights to the waters of the Owens River, an anger and frustration still existing in part to this very day in Inyo County.

The political maneuvers that preceded the acquistion of this water would take up too many pages to discuss and were highly complex to say the least. They demonstrated the very acme of political cabal that involved some of the highest officers in the United States government. One commentator said'; "These ranchers (in the Owens Valley) were naive, unsophisticated people; that is, they had faith in the Federal Government."

The whole thing probably started in the summer of 1905 when one Fred Eaton came to the Valley and viewed the gushing waters of the river and the placid waters of the lake as an excellent source of water for the arid, virtually useless lands of the San Fernando Valley. At the time the ranchers had been confering with

J.P. Lippincourt of the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation on the feasibility of building dams to maintain a steady supply of water in the valley. They already had their own irrigation system. It turned out later that "ol Lip", being an ambitious American, was drawing a paycheck both from the Federal government and from the City of Los Angeles.

He is accused of recommending to the boys in Washington that the water would be put to better use by L.A. than it ever would by the Owens Valley lads.In this he was supported by Gifford Pinchol, then the chief Forester of the fledging U.S. Forest Service. Giff had the ear of Teddy Roosevelt who cried "bully" and "delighted" everytime the ranger suggested something. What the Forest Service had to do with the Valley is unknown as there were not enough trees to start a campfire much less a forest fire in the entire valley. But Pinchot must have had something in mind for, in 1910, when Taft was president he was fired as Chief Forester and little was heard of him after that.

There are other versions of the "great steal". Some say that Eaton represented himself as being an employee of Lippincourt who told the ranchers they could either sell or have their water rights taken away and so they sold; another version says that the ranchers wanted to sell but keep the water too; and a third explanation is that the canals and ditches were jointly maintained, that one rancher would sell and his neighbor could no longer afford to keep the ditch up and so turned it over to the big city boys. Whatever the final outcome was there is no doubt but that the whole mess was one of guile, graft and political maneuvering by a bunch of big city realtors who wanted to market the lands of the San Fernando Valley and needed water to do so.

The years went by in court fights, state and congressional acts and other legislative and judicial rig-a-ma-role that gained nothing, but cost the ranchers a pretty penny. Finally, they got fed up with it all and decided to take more direct action.

It may have started when W.F. Hines, president of the Big Tree Company, was headed for Bishop and another of the innumerable meetings to discuss the matter. He was riding along the canal that watered his rangeland when he came upon a group of L.A. city employees cutting a new course for the river, in a location that would remove all the water from his ditch. He promptly rode back to the ranchhouse, got a party of armed cowboys and came back to put an end to the nonsense. The workmen, deciding against arguing with rifles, fled the scene. This was now 1922.

Then the city boys dynamited a dam installed by the Forest Service and although that branch of the government protested heatedly, the protests died on some desk in Washington. There was too much skullduggery between L.A. and Capital politicos by this time. Encouraged, the L.A. crews then started tearing out dams wherever they found them, regardless of ownership, and diverting the water into their own canal.

The first sign of retaliation was on May 21, 1924 when a charge of dynamite was set off against the aqueduct, a short distance north of Lone Pine. A lone watchman there took one look at them and said the job wasn't worth it. He hurried down to tender his resignation while the water from the canal was turned back into the river bed.

The City officials promptly ran screaming to the sheriff who dropped by and took down the names of the marauders, interspersing the rollcall with comments of "How's Martha, Sam?" "Hello' Joe, how's the new baby?"

The L.A. Light and Power lads appealed to Superior Court Dehy who issued a restraining order, then recalled it. By this time half of the Valley was up on the spillway joining in the fun. They stayed there for four days. Los Angeles employees who showed up were greeted politely and then told to get lost.

An appeal was made to Governor Friend Richardson asking for help, stating that a situation of anarchy prevailed, and give good old L.A. a hand. In those days Southern California couldn't muster the votes if can today and the Governor ignored the request. He did send State Engineer W.F. McClure down to look into the situation and he received so many different reports on what happened, and what was happening, that he didn't know what was going on.

The newspapers of the State, in those days of independent, fighting journalism, joined in the fight

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which soon shaped up with the press of Los Angeles lined up against the other papers of California and half the West.

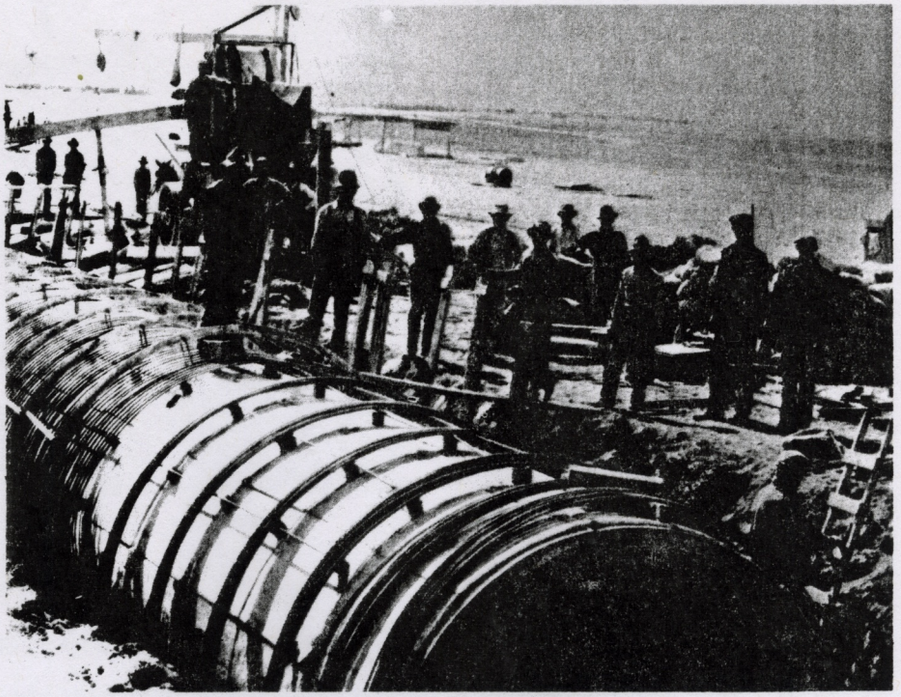
Well meaning, peaceful parties now intervened and once again the whole situation went back to endless meetings and court sessions. While everything was being properly debated all over again, the war raged on.

Los Angeles Light and Power dug a couple of wells in the Bishop area and localites promptly set off blasts in the wells. It was claimed the City was trying to get $2,500,000 in property for $141,000 -- this being their offer of payment for the land where they drilled the wells.

The Owens Valley Herald screamed so loudly about this "high handed robbery" that L.A. tried to get the State Legislature to impose a gag rule and shut the paper up. That didn't get very far either. The Herald then dared them to file libel suits but, in a star chamber meeting, the water boys decided that wasn't a very good idea either.

On May 12, 1926 another blast blew up the aqueduct near Lone Pine. This was too much for State Assemblyman Dan E. Williams. He introduced a resolution stating that Los Angeles had "adopted a policy of ruthless destruction in the Owens Valley, and to restore it to its original agricultural status. The resolution was adopted by a vote of 43 to 34. Governor Young however adopted a do nothing policy. The conflict raged on.

During June and July of 1927 six blasts rocked the canyon at the southern end of Inyo County and carried away 450 feet of the canal.



Forms for the aqueduct are placed in desert floor.
--Courtesy L.A. Light and Power.

Los Angeles now began to station armed guards along the canal, and also along the state highway. These latter stopped cars whenever they felt like it and forced drivers and passengers to submit to search. Some refused such illegal indignities and great old donnybrooks ranged along Highway 395 before that practice was halted.

These armed guards had little effect on the bombings. It was even said that some of them set off blasts themselves just to keep the job going.

Then came a horde of detectives who started snooping into the lives of all the residents of the Valley. They couldn't even visit Los Angeles without having their rooms searched. Six arrests were made but the Inyo courts promptly threw the cases out.

On top of all this came financial disaster. The Inyo County Bank, in a desperate effort to help the ranchers, reported they had a credit of $190,000 with the Wells Fargo Bank in San Francisco. It turned out to be more like $11,000 and the bank examiners dropped in for a visit.

On August 4, 1927 the following notice was posted in all the banks in the county.

"We find it necessary to close our banks in the Owens Valley. This result has been brought about by the past four years of

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destructive work carried on by the City of Los Angeles.''

The owners of the bank, W.W. and M.Q. Watterson were charged with thirty-six counts, and because the true background of the case was barred from the courtroom as ''irrevelent'' they were found guilty and sent to prison. In addition to the failure of the banks a large number of industries in the Valley also went down the drain. Los Angeles had scored a stunning, sweeping victory.

Families, disheartened, began to move away, selling their lands to the enemy for whatever they could get. Some hung on, fighting through the courts, trying to get a fair price for their lands; or for destruction so done to them. Cases continued to go through the courts up until the early thirties.

Much of the resentment still exists amongst the older families in the Valley and vast, scenic Owens Lake, where once steamboats crossed, lies empty -- a reminder of when unscruplous real estate promoters aided and abetted by devious politicians battled the people of Owens Valley and won, so they could peddle the desert lands of the San Fernando Valley.

Christmas morning in Bishop in 1912.
--Courtesy Bishop Museum at Laws.

KEOUGH HOT SPRINGS

Once this was the gay social center for Inyoites who came many miles to swim in the 127 degree water, to dance beneath the Japanese lanterns on the spacious dance pavilion, to dine, or to swim in the pool. But this was in the days when seven miles represented a couple of hours trip from Bishop. The motor car came into being and the crowds went farther afield. Now, Keough Hot Springs, like many other hot springs in the state are enjoying a re-birth as people are beginning to re-discover the healing and soothing enjoyment of bathing in the warm mineral waters.

The Indians were the first to recognize these values, long before the white man was to come and they still come to bathe in the creek.

In 1917 Mike Milovich built the pool and steam room for a Mr. Keough who owned the ranch at that time. The ranchhouse adjacent to the pool, burned later and the grim pillars of its demise stick stiffly into the sky. Who Keough was, and when he came there, has been undetermined apart from the fact that he did once own a ranch there.

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An ethnically diverse, mostly transient workforce built the L.A. Aqueduct and many workers lived in construction camps, such as the one shown here, located along the length of the 233-mile-long aqueduct. Photo courtesy Eastern California Museum

9-26-2013

Archaeologist digs up insight about life in aqueduct camp

Excavation both confirms and contradicts historical accounts of life for those building 'modern marvel'

By Jon Klusmire
Special to The Inyo Register

The remnants of a Los Angeles Aqueduct construction camp have produced insights into how the aqueduct workforce lived and worked, what they ate, smoked and drank, and how the physical layout of the camp itself reflected "scientific management practices" introduced in the early 1900s to improve productivity and control the diverse workforce.

From April 1912 to February 1913, about 140 workers occupied the Alabama Gates construction camp, which consisted of 36 structures, ranging from wood cabins to canvas tents reinforced with wood frames and wood floors. The camp was located just north of the Alabama Gates, between the aqueduct and the current highway, U.S. 395.

Excavation of the site in 1997 confirmed some

See CAMP, page 3

CAMP

Continued from front page

historical accounts of life in the construction camps, but also contradicted some of the conventional wisdom about the aqueduct workforce.

For example, "whiskey built the aqueduct," is one of more colorful quotes attributed to William Mulholland, the head of the L.A. Department of Water and the man who engineered and supervised the construction of the aqueduct. But an examination of the Alabama Gate Camp's refuse dumps suggests that alcohol consumption in this particular camp was relatively modest, by the day's standards.

Archaeologist and historian Thad Van Bueren will discuss his work documenting and interpreting the site during a presentation at 7 p.m. Saturday, Sept. 28 at the American Legion Hall, at the corner of Kearsarge St. and Hwy. 395, in Independence. For information, call (760) 878-0258. The presentation is sponsored by the Eastern California Museum and the Metabolic Studio.

Van Bueren published his findings in a paper titled, "Struggling with Class Relations at a Los Angeles Aqueduct Construction Camp."

The organization and design of the buildings in the camp showed how "management," namely the City of Los Angeles, tried to influence the work habits and lifestyle of the workers in the camp. Unlike work camps from an earlier time that were haphazard in their configuration, the Alabama Hills camp had an orderly and formal arrangement. The tents, which were all the same, standardized size, were evenly spaced and arranged in neat rows, with communal buildings separated from living areas. That uniform tidiness "set a clear tone of discipline and conformity," Van Bueren writes.

The camp's layout was part of the larger effort to institute "scientific management" that would change workers' behavior on and off the job to promote regularity, timeliness and efficiency. A key management tool was creating specific job classifications that drove wedges between the various group of workers based on pay and other incentives. Thus, the highest paid jobs were dominated by native-born whites, while the lowest paying jobs were filled by foreign-born men.

In addition, the camp was segregated into neighborhoods based on job assignments, social standing and marital status. The tents were occupied by the common labors, with each tent housing four men. The four wooden cabins were reserved for higher-paid supervisory or highly skilled staff, and made up a clear, "high-status neighborhood." Not only were the cabins a good distance from the tent neighborhood and other buildings in camp, the cabins also were home to the few women and children in the camp.

That few families were in the camp reinforces the historical record that the aqueduct workforce sought short-term work, as workers would come and go as they found more attractive or higher-paying jobs. One interesting reason workers left the job involved immigrants from the Balkans, who left en masse for Europe in 1912 to take up arms in preparation for World War I.

The Alabama Hills workers were assigned the task of building the Alabama Gates, and digging and then lining with concrete the 30-mile stretch of aqueduct from the Gates to Haiwee Reservoir. The work was demanding, the terrain rough and records show men worked 10 hours a day on both the day and night shifts, despite the fact the state had passed an 8-hour work day law in 1909.

Back in camp, food was an issue. In 1911, there was general strike over food in the aqueduct work camps. In the Alabama Hills camp, Van Bueren concluded that meat from cows, pigs and sheep arrived at the camp already butchered, which is consistent with historical accounts. The meat was also of moderate to low quality, though, also confirming that poor food in the 58 construction camps contributed to discontent and high turnover among workers. In this Sierra camp, however, there was also evidence that workers' supplemented camp food with wild game and fish.

Evidence of tobacco and alcohol use in camp confirms and conflicts with historical accounts. Tobacco was widely used by all classes and residents in the camp.

But the refuse piles would suggest that alcohol consumption, while widespread and consistent, didn't quite measure up to the historical record. Contemporary accounts include numerous statements about the large amounts of alcohol consumed daily by workers, who then couldn't or wouldn't work while "recovering." It was also common to find workers drinking during the workday, and drinking all day during holidays.

In the Alabama Hills camp, Van Bueren concluded that consumption of alcohol was "relatively low when compared to the reputation of aqueduct workers." While that might sound virtuous, there could be another explanation: ample supplies of alcohol could be found and consumed in Lone Pine, which was only three miles away.

By combining the archaeological record of the Alabama Hills Camp with the larger trends of the time and historical accounts, Van Bueren has created an interesting account of what everyday life was probably like for a typical aqueduct worker toiling away in Inyo County in the winter of 1912-13.

The workers in the Alabama Gates Construction Camp occupied the camp in 1912-13, and built the gates, above, and the concrete-lined section of the L.A. Aqueduct. Photo courtesy Eastern California Museum

Whiskey Is for Drinking Water Is for Fighting Over

By: Abby Wagner

"Whiskey is for drinking; water is for fighting over." This quote, sometimes attributed to Mark Twain, might not make sense to those of us living in the moist Mid-Western United States.

Ohio River and Louisville Skyline

Water's something we take for granted here in Louisville, Kentucky, where 90 billion gallons of water pass by daily in the Ohio River.[1] With all this water at our disposal, it is very hard to believe that in other places water is scarce and often fought over. From small family feuds to full scale combat, water has been a source of discord for centuries. Many people have family history entangled in this chaos and violence. Water can bring people together, but more often, it tears us apart.

Like others, I have family that is involved with water trouble. My family on my mother's side lives in California. My great-great-great grandfather was part of the water wars of the Owens Valley. The water wars were started by Frederick Eaton when he became the mayor of Los Angeles in 1898 (a position he held until 1900). The newly appointed mayor gave his friend Mr. William Mulholland the job of overseer, or superintendent, of the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power (LADWP).[2]

The two men had an ambition to make Los Angeles expand. They believed that, in the near future, it could be far bigger than the Los Angeles they knew and loved. This was seen as wishful thinking by most people. Everyone in the town knew that, as much as they liked to dream of a larger city, Los Angeles needed more water to support the people living in it. Unfortunately, water in that quantity was something Los Angeles did not have.[3]

In 1900, my great-great-great grandfather Wood Larson, his wife of thirty-two years, Mary Jane Owens Larson, and their six children moved to Bishop, California in the Owens Valley. They bought a 160-acre former homestead, and built a ranch where they raised beef cattle, alfalfa, and dairy cows. For five years, the family lived happily in Inyo County. The kids could fish and swim in the nearby Owens River, and the family enjoyed hiking in the breath-taking Sierra Nevada mountains. It is easy to see why so many artists, including famous photographer Galen Rowell, held this area in such high esteem, and are still in awe of its beauty. Then, around 1905, things began to change.

Bishop, CA and the Sierra Nevada Mountains

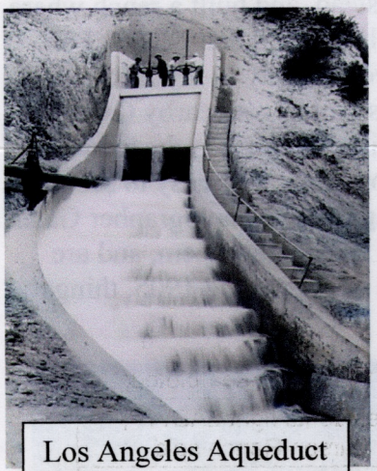
[1] Kadie Engstrom, Education Coordinator, Belle of Louisville, "Steamboats and the Ohio River: Some Facts of Fascination," URL: http://www.ket.org/trips/belle/related/belle-steamboats-ohio.pdf on November 29, 2009.

[2] "California Water Wars," URL: http://www.freewebs.com/mbranson/Page%20E%20California%20Water%20Wars.doc on November 25, 2009.

[3] "California Water Wars," URL: http://wapedia.mobi/en/California_Water_Wars on November 29, 2009.

A year before, in 1904, ex-mayor Eaton went on a family camping trip. After spending some relaxing time in Yosemite, he crossed to the eastern side of the Sierra Nevada at Tioga Pass, entering the Owens Valley. The trip turned from a pleasure outing to a political one. Soon after he passed through Bishop, Mr. Eaton began making plans to take the water from the Owens River to southern California. Upon arrival back in Los Angeles, he told the superintendent of the LADWP, Mr. Mulholland, about the Owens River, assuring him that this was the sustenance their growing city needed. According to the LADWP of current times,

> "Eaton visited the Owens Valley in 1905 and began to purchase land for the City of Los Angeles. He gave the impression that he was working for the U.S. Reclamation Service on a public irrigation project, angering local residents when they discovered he was buying land and water rights for Los Angeles."[4]



Los Angeles Aqueduct

Within eight years, in 1913, William Mulholland had completed the 233-mile Los Angeles Aqueduct. Many of his biographies explain that he grew obsessed with this feat of engineering and would let nothing stand in his way. He knew that the work his men did was dangerous, but he simply replaced workers when they died of injuries sustained on the job. Many Owens Valley families were forced to leave their farms after the water level in their irrigation ditches was so low that they could no longer water their livestock or crops. After the aqueduct was completed, the population in L.A. rose significantly. This was the last straw for most of the Valley's residents, and the water wars truly began. As friends and neighbors began to sabotage the aqueduct, private investigators and detectives were called in, but no one would turn in a local for an act of "self defense." The Owens Valley water wars were at their worst in 1924 when

> "…seventy armed Valley men seized control of a critical aqueduct gate and completely shut off the flow of the river. By the next day, about 700 of their friends and neighbors had joined them for a massive demonstration of civic solidarity. The California governor refused to send in the state militia, despite the demands of Los Angeles business leaders; the local sheriff declared himself a 'friend and sympathizer' of the rebels. Newspaper reporters from as far away as Paris came to report on the picturesque scene. Even the *Los Angeles Times* editorialized that the farmers were 'honest, earnest, hardworking American citizens who look upon Los Angeles as an Octopus about to strangle out their lives.'"[5]

That same year, my great grandfather, Robert Wood Larson, went down to congratulate some men after a successful attempt at dynamiting the aqueduct. Although the saboteurs had much popular support, what they were doing was illegal, and their numbers were too small to keep up the fight against the huge (and still growing) city to their south. Although these battles *did* result in some major water loss for Los Angeles, those in charge of the Aqueduct project knew that, eventually, they would win the war for water. When trees in orchards in the Owens Valley began to die, many sources report that Mulholland dismissively said that he "half-regretted the demise of so many of the valley's orchard trees, because now there were no longer enough trees to hang all the troublemakers who live there."[6]

In 1925, my Larson ancestors were forced to sell the family ranch. An adequate water supply no longer reached their land. They packed their belongings and drove away from their home of twenty-five years.

Finally, in 1984, both sides, Los Angeles and Inyo County alike, came together and made an agreement. This agreement specifically stated that each area would have to develop the ground water management plans *together,* and, in addition, the city of Los Angeles arranged to fund enhancement and mitigation

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[4] Los Angeles Department of Water and Power website, "The Story of the Los Angeles Aqueduct: The Last Spike Is Driven," URL: http://wsoweb.ladwp.com/Aqueduct/historyoflaa/index.htm on November 29, 2009.

[5] PBS, "William Mulholland," URL: http://www.pbs.org/weta/thewest/people/i_r/mulholland.htm on November 29, 2009.

[6] Ibid.

processes. This includes an improvement project done in Big Pine, a small town roughly fifteen miles south of Bishop. Neighbors in this area dug ditches in each others' yards for water to flow through, and they use them for cooling off from the high desert heat and watering their yards. This water is from the Big Pine Creek before it goes to the Los Angeles Aqueduct. My grandfather now enjoys water that was taken from his family almost a hundred years ago, returned to his own backyard.

Today, a good long while after the Owens Valley Water Wars began, many people of that region still feel very strongly about Los Angeles stealing their water --obviously in a negative way. According to my grandfather, Robert Wood Larson, Jr., who lives approximately 15 miles south of the old family ranch site, "I grew up listening to complaints about Los Angeles and the DWP at family gatherings. I didn't completely understand what was being said, but I grew up knowing I should never cheer for the Lakers. I still don't."[7]

Abby Wagner (age 12) 2009
7th Grade Language Arts Personal Feature Article
Noe Middle School
Jefferson County Public Schools, Louisville, KY

[7] Robert Wood Larson, Jr., from a telephone interview on November 29, 2009. All Larson family history included in this paper was gathered during this conversation.

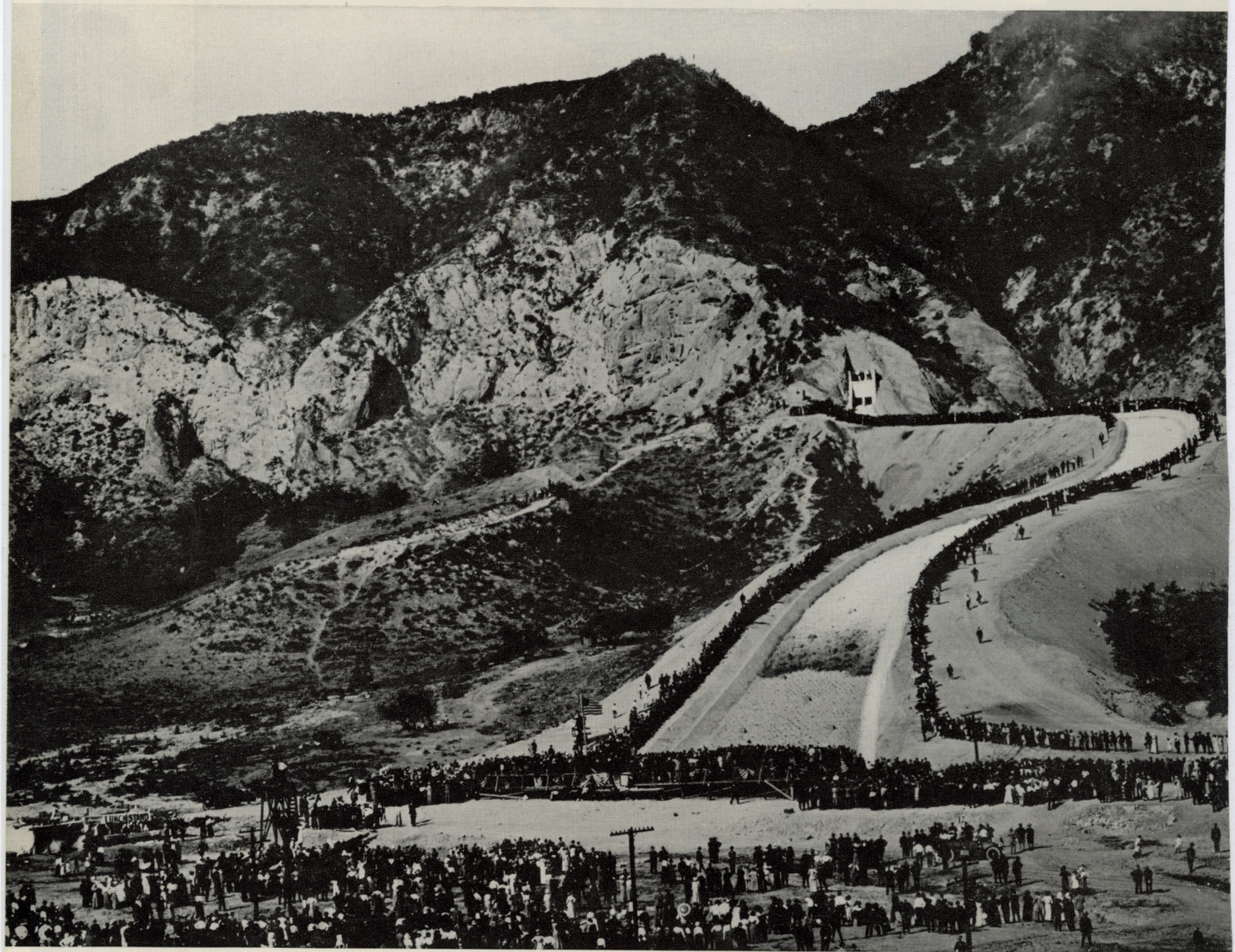
Population Change, 1900-2000 by Decade
Los Angeles County

Period	Population Increase	% Change in Population	Owens Valley Events
1900-1910	333,833	+196.03%	Larson Ranch purchased; LADWP founded; 1st aqueduct planned
1910-1920	432,324	+85.76%	1st aqueduct completed;
1920-1930	1,272,037	+135.84%	Residents fight LADWP; Larson Ranch sold
1930-1940	577,151	+26.13%	
1940-1950	1,366,044	+49.04%	
1950-1960	1,888,147	+45.48%	
1960-1970	992,241	+16.43%	2nd aqueduct completed
1970-1980	445,582	+6.34%	
1980-1990	1,385,507	+18.53%	LADWP donates funds for enhancement/mitigation projects
1990-2000	656,174	+7.40%	

Source: U.S. Census Bureau URL: http://www.laalmanac.com/population/po07.htm

THE WATER WAR

By REMI NADEAU



"There was a mighty hissing roar and down the great spillway dashed the foaming liquid." So an eyewitness described the scene above, on November 5, 1913, as William Mulholland triumphantly opened his aqueduct.

As Owens Valley water came down the aqueduct, thirsty Los Angeles rejoiced. But angry farmers were buying dynamite and cleaning guns

TITLE INSURANCE AND TRUST COMPANY, LOS ANGELES

Beyond the Missouri River, water has been almost a sacred commodity—accorded the same passionate respect that it received in the Bible lands. There is an old saying in the West: "Steal my horse, carry off my wife, but don't touch my water." Ever since the American frontier reached the great bend of the Missouri, water—or the lack of it—has been the chief determinant of western development. And from the time that the first farmer fenced a water hole on the open range, it has been the West's chief source of conflict. Texas and New Mexico contended over the Rio Grande. Colorado battled Kansas over the Arkansas River, then turned to fight Wyoming for the North Platte. California took on all comers in the struggle for the Colorado River.

Ordinarily, these epic contests were fought in the realm of water law. Throughout most of the Far West, this body of law was based on the miner's code of "first in use, first in right"—even though the benefited land was not contiguous to the water source. But in California, water law flowed from two origins—the priority rights established by the early American miners, and the riparian rights for contiguous land, according to the Spanish tradition and the English common law.

The complications brought on by this clash of two traditions intensified the water struggle in California and put a premium on legal cunning. While most western fights over water took place in the courtroom or the legislative hall, Californians fought many of theirs outside the law because one side or another distrusted legal machinery. This was the basis of violence in the Los Angeles-Owens Valley conflict. Not only was it the most savage water war in United States history; it provided an early warning of a disturbing modern trend—the inability of outlying communities to protect their identity and their way of life from being swallowed by Megalopolis.

In the long drought that afflicted California from 1892 to 1904, the burgeoning city of Los Angeles appeared to have reached its limit at a population of approximately 200,000. City parks and residential lawns were allowed to dry up. Irrigation canals were commandeered to supply drinking water. If Los Angeles could not find a new water source—and quickly—it would no longer be able to absorb the steady tide of newcomers from the Midwest. To the Los Angeles boosters, such a catastrophe was unthinkable.

One man stepped forward to lead the Angelenos out of their dilemma. William Mulholland, an Irish immigrant, had arrived in 1877 with ten dollars in his pocket and the resolve to "grow with the country." Within nine years he had become superintendent of the company supplying water to the city, and when the company was purchased by Los Angeles in 1902, Mulholland was placed in charge of the entire waterworks. He had risen by hard work, by diligent study of engineering books late into the night, and—most important—by sheer force of personality. His supreme self-confidence inspired city authorities to act upon his recommendations alone, without further study. "They have always been," he once said, "in the habit of taking my word."

With this kind of authority, Mulholland charged forth in

LOS ANGELES DEPT. OF WATER AND POWER

This photograph of one of the monster siphons that took the water over the Sierras indicates the scope of the construction job. Engineers had to build a tramway to deliver the huge pipe sections—up to ten feet across and some of them more than an inch thick. Concrete for the piers (cement came from a specially erected plant) was mixed on the site.

the late summer of 1904 to combat the city's water shortage. Since local sources were already tapped, he looked afield for a new supply. His friend Fred Eaton, a former Los Angeles mayor, had once told him of a magnificent water source on the east side of the Sierra Nevadas. Desperately, he now asked Eaton to show it to him.

In September the two friends climbed into a two-horse buckboard and headed north. Camping in the open, they drove 250 miles over a rutted wagon road across the Mojave Desert to Owens Valley. Through this green oasis, nestled against the east scarp of the High Sierra like some remote Alpine vale, flowed stream upon stream of fresh snow water. They converged into the Owens River, which coursed down the valley and lost itself in the alkaline pollution of Owens Lake, one of the world's rare dead seas.

In the 1860's pioneer American farmers had wrested the valley from the Paiute Indians, and by the seventies were beginning to divert water from the river and its tributaries into large canals to irrigate the land. By the time Mulholland reached the valley in 1904, he found a population of some five thousand and a small empire—about 38,000 acres—of fruit orchards, melon vines, and cool alfalfa. It was truly a "land flowing with milk and honey."

But in the meandering river and its feeder streams Mulholland saw only one thing: enough water to supply two million people and allow his own stunted city to grow into a giant. What was more, according to Fred Eaton's rough calculations, the river could be diverted around Owens Lake and brought south all the way to Los Angeles by gravity, without the aid of a single pump.

It would, of course, be years before the city would grow enough to use the entire flow of the river. But in the meantime, to maintain title to the water under the law of prior use, the surplus could be used by farmers in San Fernando Valley, adjacent to Los Angeles. The whole project would represent the biggest municipal aqueduct in the world—a breathtaking project for a self-educated engineer. Immediately, Mulholland was captured by the boldness of Fred Eaton's concept. "When I saw it staring me in the face," he later declared, "I couldn't back away from it." While Mulholland sold the plan to Los Angeles authorities, Eaton went through lower Owens Valley lining up riparian water rights.

Trouble loomed in the valley's own ambitions for water development. The young United States Reclamation Service, founded by Theodore Roosevelt in 1902, had proposed a dam in the Owens River gorge to store water for irrigating the valley below. Its isolation and its limited area would keep the region from becoming a major agricultural empire like the one being carved out in the Imperial Valley. But by providing an assured water supply year in and year out, the proposed reclamation project would certainly bring to Owens Valley a new order of life and prosperity. In this clash of interests the city had a key ally. The chief Reclamation Service engineer for the Southwest was J. B. Lippincott, a friend of Eaton and Mulholland, and by "religion" an ardent Los Angeles booster. At his insistence, consideration of the Owens River reclamation project was abandoned to make way for the city's water plans.

When the Los Angeles *Times* broke the news in July, 1905, of a "Titanic Project to Give City a River," there were two distinct reactions. Among the boosters there was immediate jubilation: the city's wonderful growth would not be halted for lack of water! Within hours, property in much of the county doubled in price.

But in Owens Valley a different reaction greeted the *Times* story. All at once its people saw their reclamation dream go glimmering. Fred Eaton and his son, finishing some last-minute affairs in the valley town of Bishop, saw an ugly mob gathering around them in the street. They hurriedly packed and drove their buggy out of town, but before he escaped, Eaton was told that he would "never take the water out of the valley" and that if he came back he would be drowned in the river.

Nor was valley anger cooled by reports that water which Los Angeles did not actually need for the next few years would be used for irrigating the San Fernando Valley. As early as 1903, a syndicate of Los Angeles entrepreneurs had taken an option on a large chunk of that valley. Not very long afterward it was joined by Moses H. Sherman, who was a member of the Board of Water Commissioners. After Mulholland outlined his aqueduct plan to city officials, but before it was publicly announced, the syndicate exercised its option and bought 16,200 acres. The land thus purchased at approximately $30 an acre was to soar to $300 an acre. Today it is valued by the front foot. When operations of the syndicate were made public in 1905, Owens Valley people believed they were the victims of an outrageous water grab for the benefit of a few land schemers. Awaiting their chance, they moved to block Mulholland when he asked for a right of way for his proposed aqueduct across federal lands. "Not one drop for irrigation!" they shouted, pointing to the San Fernando deal.

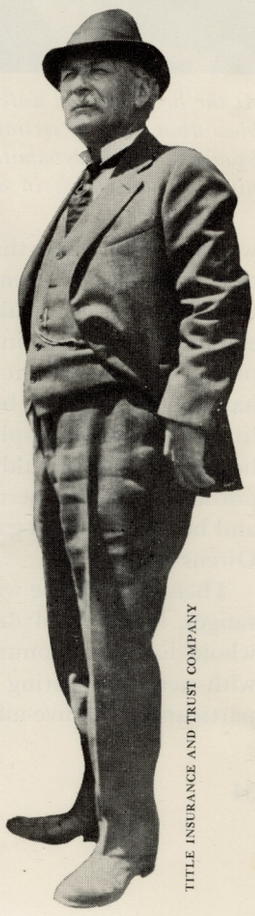
The battle that followed raged from the floor of Congress to the White House. To prevent profiteering on the water itself, President Roosevelt proposed an amendment to the right-of-way bill that would prohibit Los Angeles from selling water to corporations or individuals for resale. Thus altered, the right-of-way bill passed Congress in June, 1906. But it contained no prohibition against the use of Owens River water for irrigation in the San Fernando Valley.

Inspired by this victory, the Angelenos moved to consolidate their water gains in Owens Valley. Once again the federal government was called upon for help. To forestall private claimants who might harass the city's program, the Reclamation Service had continued to bar entry to public lands that had been within its abandoned project. But this did not include most of the flatland of the valley. The Angelenos thereupon asked Chief Forester Gifford Pinchot to extend national-forest boundaries to include the valley, even though the Forest Service Law forbade the reservation of land more valuable "for agricultural purposes than for forest purposes."

Owens Valley people were outraged. Throughout the region, they cried, the only trees were those they themselves had planted. Nevertheless, in April of 1908 Pinchot's decree extending the Sierra Forest Reserve was signed by the President. The city was tightening its grip. "Los Angeles has been given all that she asked for," groaned one valley editor, adding ominously, "except the water."

But the intrepid Mulholland, who had secured $25,000,000 in two bond elections to finance the big ditch, was already in the field turning the earth.

Over most of the 240-mile route he faced a forbidding desert, devoid of the necessities of life, innocent of supply lines, crisscrossed by jagged mountains, and cursed with brutal heat. Fortunately the rugged Irishman thrived on challenge. Since steam power



TITLE INSURANCE AND TRUST COMPANY

William Mulholland—"the Chief"—built his ditch in five years, as he promised, and under the $25,000,000 budget.

LOS ANGELES DEPT. OF WATER AND POWER

At the height of the water war, on May 27, 1927, Owens Valley farmers blew up a 450-foot section of No Name siphon. The repair bill came to $500,000. When dynamiters struck again at another spot the following night, the city sent in armed guards. But the destruction continued.

was impractical over this arid route, he built two hydroelectric plants in Owens Valley and strung 169 miles of transmission lines—making his aqueduct the first major engineering project in the United States constructed principally by electric power. He solved part of the hauling problem by building another plant near the line of march to supply the million barrels of cement he estimated he would need. And for the heavy transportation the Southern Pacific Railroad took a hand and built a standard-gauge branch line northward into Owens Valley.

Then, over sterile wasteland and through mountain ranges, Mulholland drove his giant ditch. Along the whole line the monumental work was accomplished with new engineering triumphs. Digging his tunnels, particularly the five-mile Elizabeth Tunnel that bored through the Coast Range into southern California, Mulholland's crew equaled, then repeatedly raised, the world's hardrock drilling record. To take water across the deep canyons of the Sierra foothills the ditch was converted into monstrous inverted siphons—one of them built to withstand a greater head of water than any other pipe in the nation. Hauling sections of steel pipe to this siphon from the nearest rail point required wagon teams of fifty-two mules each.

By the middle of 1912, in spite of physical obstacles, financial problems, and labor discontent, Mulholland was able to report to the city that "the end of our task seems fairly in sight." But he was nearly exhausted from tension and overwork. "If it were not for looking ahead to the time of reward . . ." he once said, "I could not go on with the work, for I am worn out."

That time came on November 5, 1913, when Mulholland's big ditch was put into operation with a huge ceremony at the northeast corner of San Fernando Valley. At the point where the aqueduct came through the mountains, an artificial cascade had been built to display the water as it splashed into the valley. To this spot on the appointed day came thousands of Angelenos—by carriage, auto, and train. Around a flag-draped platform they gathered for the preliminary speeches; above on the mountainside a crew of men stood at the gates, ready to crank wheels that would release the first Owens River water. Mulholland himself gave them the signal by unfurling the Stars and Stripes on a flagpole. The assembly cheered, cannons boomed, a brass band played furiously. Down the causeway came a torrent of water—foaming, dancing, churning, spraying its mist over the nearest bystanders. Without waiting for the presentation speeches the entire multitude rushed to the side of the cascade. Left virtually without an audience, the exuberant Mulholland turned to the mayor, who was to receive the water on behalf of the city, and made the five-word speech that has become famous:

"There it is. Take it."

In this triumphant moment Los Angeles—and all of California—turned to shower adulation on William Mulholland. The aqueduct was recognized across the country as the finest in the United States. As an engineering feat it was second only to the great Panama Canal. The University of California gave Mulholland an honorary doctor's degree, and he was introduced everywhere as "the Goethals of the West" and as "California's greatest man."

Virtually overnight, Los Angeles moved from water famine to water flood. The San Fernando Valley was transformed from a grain-raising community dependent on intermittent rainfall to an empire of truck gardens and orchards—one of the richest agricultural communities in the nation. In 1915 practically the entire valley joined the city. With their sure water supply as a lure, the Los Angeles boosters were able to annex one community after another to create the biggest municipal area in the world.

But for all his engineering genius, Mulholland had omitted one vital feature from his Owens River project—a major reservoir. In his anxiety to get water to the city, he had simply diverted the river to Los Angeles; the only reservoirs were those necessary for the month-to-month operation of the aqueduct. He had, it was true, tapped the river below the valley's main center of agriculture, so that under ordinary circumstances both farmers and city dwellers would have enough water. But without a reservoir there was no means of storing the precipitation of the wet years; when the dry years came, there was insufficient water to supply both the city and the valley. Upon this predicament the Owens Valley water war was reborn, and it was to become more savage than ever.

The obvious site for such a reservoir was the same that had been planned for the ill-fated federal reclamation project. A dam located in the Owens River gorge upstream from the valley, above the town of Bishop, would back up a magnificent lake in Long Valley. Fred Eaton, who owned the site, had offered to sell it to Los Angeles for something like a million dollars. But Mulholland, believing his friend was trying to take advantage of the city, refused. Eaton then gave up an easement for a reservoir that could have been created by a hundred-foot dam, but such a reservoir was too small to serve as a year-to-year regulator. When the city began constructing the dam anyway, the settlers of Owens Valley filed an injunction suit: they would never stand for a dam on their river unless it was big enough to assure water for all. Caught between Fred Eaton and the valley farmers, Los Angeles abandoned its dam. The Owens River was left uncontrolled, and the first dry spell set the city and the valley at each other's throats.

By 1923 the great aqueduct that had been built for fifty years of growth was already proving inadequate. Los Angeles, enjoying its biggest real-estate boom, had outgrown its old rival, San Francisco. In the lush San Fernando Valley the farmers would have used almost the entire flow of the aqueduct in the summer months if Mulholland had not arbitrarily shut off irrigation water.

Desperate for water, Mulholland invaded Owens

CONTINUED ON PAGE 103

The leaders of the opposition were Mark (left) and Wilfred W. Watterson, whose banks held mortgages on many of the valley's farms. When they were jailed for speculating with bank funds in the fall of 1927, the farmers were left leaderless.

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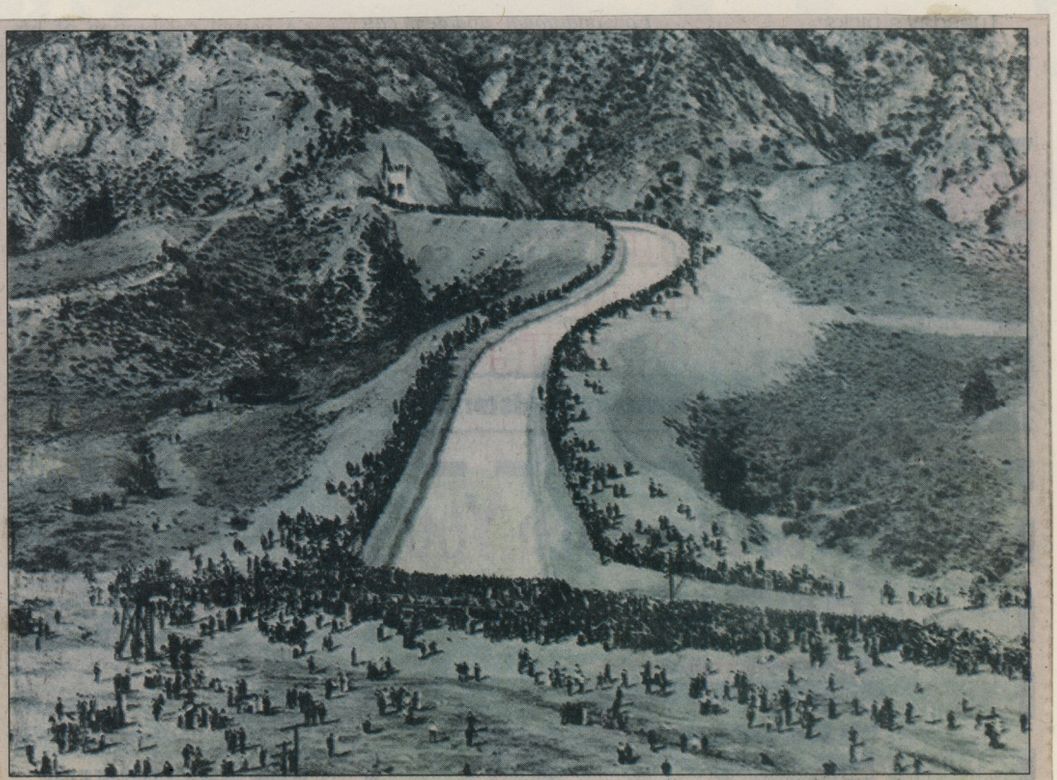


Los Angeles celebrates the arrival of Owens Valley water via the aqueduct at The Cascades on Nov. 5, 1913. It was on this date and at this location that Chief Engineer of the Aqueduct Project William Mulholland told the assembled masses, "There it is – take it." Photo courtesy Eastern California

The Water War

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 35

Valley in quest of new sources. In the lower valley, where the city already owned most of the water rights, he sank new wells to tap the underground basin. And in the upper valley, which was still green with growing crops, his agents tried to buy water rights from the farmers in order to send a bigger flow into the aqueduct.

They found the valley organized against them. Leading the settlers were two brothers, Wilfred and Mark Watterson, whose five banks dominated the economic life of eastern California. Mark, the younger, was a good-natured mixer, inclined to follow the lead of his older brother. Wilfred, though more dignified and aloof, was nevertheless extremely well-liked; when meeting with a group of men he had the ability, as one observer put it, to "talk 'em out of their hind legs."

To prevent the city from getting further water rights in Owens Valley, the Wattersons conceived the idea of tying all the irrigation canals together in one large Owens Valley Irrigation District. With their customary persuasiveness they had put their plan over in an election late in 1922. But before the water rights had actually been turned over to the new district, the city made its move. Overnight two agents moved through the farmhouses along the McNally ditch, one of the oldest and largest irrigation canals on the river, offering premium prices for water rights. By next morning they had taken more than a million dollars' worth of options. When this news flew through Bishop, the people fairly exploded with rage. The city thought it had smashed the irrigation district? Very well, they would see that no water secured in the McNally deal would ever reach the aqueduct.

Soon every farm canal above the city's intake was gulping all the water it could carry, and overflowing onto marginal cropland. Below the last valley canal the bed of the river was dry as the desert. In the spring of 1923 Los Angeles was tapping its capital funds of water in the aqueduct reservoirs. In San Fernando Valley the crops were condemned to die. And in Owens Valley the city's predicament in paying for a million dollars' worth of water it could not deliver became an uproarious joke.

Mulholland had reckoned without the human factor. Embattled farmers at the source of water were threatening the very life of Los Angeles. In this frantic moment his water department made another error.

The last big ditch before the mouth of the aqueduct was the Owens River and Big Pine Canal, which was drinking in all the water not siphoned off by the canals upstream. At first the city's agents tried to buy water rights in the Big Pine ditch. But the Big Piners formed a "pool" and demanded rates roughly double those paid along the McNally ditch. The city agents thereupon resorted to what one called "primitive measures." The Big Pine intake was located at the point of a U-bend in the meandering river. One morning the Big Piners discovered city workmen with mules and scrapers cutting a ditch across the neck of the bend. If the river were diverted through such a ditch, the Big Pine Canal would be dry and the aqueduct would be gurgling with water. It was an astounding piece of deviltry for a municipality to engage in, but the municipality was powerfully thirsty.

Quickly the Big Piners rose to give battle. A posse of about twenty armed men—some on horseback, some in Model T's—poured across Owens River to serve what one of them called a "shotgun injunction." To the city workmen they gave stern notice: "We don't want any shootin', but we're not goin' to let you make that cut."

With that they threw the city's grading equipment into the river and settled down to guard the strategic bend. For two nights, relieving each other around the clock, the minutemen of Big Pine kept up their vigil. Finally, seeing that the city was not prepared to fight, they struck camp.

"Los Angeles, it's your move now," challenged the Big Pine newspaper. "We're ready for you."

Faced with this firm opposition, the city reopened negotiations for purchase—this time on Big Pine terms. Two months later the Big Pine farmers sold out for a total of $1,100,000—a price that made many a family financially independent.

Such rates now gave the water war a new turn. Seeing the color of the city's money, the other canal groups determined to sell out too. There were, to be sure, many families whose love of the land made them oppose sale at any price, but fearing they would be left to maintain a canal without the help of neighbors, they sold against their will. Still, from the moment of the McNally and Big Pine deals, the water war was chiefly a contest between valley farmers who wanted to force Los Angeles to buy them out at high prices, and city representatives who merely wanted to get the use of water rights they had already bought. To enforce their demands, the farmers of the upper valley continued to divert most of the city's water into their own canals.

By March of 1924 this strategy was working well. Los Angeles was getting so little water that Mulholland prohibited irrigation in San Fernando Valley "until we get a rainfall." Faced with destruction of

their crops, the San Fernando farmers sent a delegation up to Owens Valley to buy a chunk of water. The Watterson brothers led a local delegation which escorted the San Fernandans along canals brimming full with clear Sierra water. Not one drop of it, said the hosts, was for sale. The entire upper valley, land and water, *was* for sale, however; it could be delivered in forty-eight hours—for $8,000,000. If the Angelenos needed the water so badly, they ought to be willing to pay what it would be worth in Los Angeles.

Back to the city went the San Fernando delegation. Within two months the city gave its answer. Suit was filed against the upper valley canals to recover the McNally and Big Pine water that Los Angeles had purchased. The Owens Valley people, fearing they could never defeat the city in court, prepared for violence.

On May 20, 1924, three boxes of dynamite were taken from the Watterson powder house at Bishop. A dynamiting job required no more than one or two experts. But some forty valley patriots assembled south of town for the excitement. In a caravan of cars the conspirators filed down the valley highway that evening while bystanders stood gaping. A few miles north of the town of Lone Pine they pulled off the road and began their work. Shortly after 1 A.M., the lower valley was awakened as if by an earthquake. Forty feet of concrete ditch was blasted away, but a great shower of rocks fell back into the hole and prevented most of the water from escaping. Quickly the dynamiters scattered over byroads to find their way back to Bishop while the valley came alive with the frantic activity of city aqueduct employees.

The preliminary skirmishing was over; the water contest had become a shooting war. Enraged at this attack on his aqueduct, Mulholland hurled a diatribe against Owens Valley ranchers that included such terms as "yellow" and "barking dogs." From the north came immediate warning that if he ever set foot in Bishop he would be lynched.

"They wouldn't have the nerve," roared the old fighter. "I'd just as soon walk the whole length of Owens Valley unarmed."

But the valley men had succeeded in rousing the city's interest in their plight. From the south came a parade of excited Angelenos—reporters, committees, engineers, and finally the Los Angeles water board. Accompanying its members was Mulholland, who made good his defiance of Owens Valley hotheads. At Bishop they were told by Wilfred Watterson that the only fair solution was to buy the whole district. Instead, when the commissioners returned to Los Angeles they drew up a plan to insure a sufficient water supply for the remaining valley farmers. They further promised, in compensation for loss of business from previous land purchases, to help build up the valley communities by highway improvements that would increase tourist trade.

A month later the valley gave its answer—in violence. On the morning of November 16, 1924, Mark Watterson led a little army of between sixty and a hundred men in an auto parade down the length of Owens Valley. They seized the aqueduct at the Alabama Gates, near Lone Pine, and turned the water out through an overflow spillway. Almost immediately the city's representative in the valley, Edward F. Leahey, arrived at the gates, in defiance of a warning to stay away. Leaving his car at the foot of the hill, he hiked up the slope to the wheelhouse. Through one of its windows a noose suddenly appeared and dangled before his eyes. Without blanching, he continued to the top. Six men, including Watterson, met him.

"Who's in charge here?" Leahey demanded.

"We're all in charge," returned Watterson.

"You can't contend we have no right to this water," shouted Leahey. "It's not hurting anybody going down the ditch."

"Don't you realize," Watterson snapped, "that whether people are damaged or think they are, the effect is the same?"

The strategy was plain enough. This was not an attempt to seize water, for the aqueduct was located downstream from the valley's center of resistance. It was a demonstration, through which the valley hoped at most to force the city to buy them out, and at least to publicize the affair throughout California. To the reporters who quickly gathered, the settlers gave their manifesto: "We are here to keep this spillway open. We will stay here until we are driven out or dragged out."

Against this threat Los Angeles first tried legal action. The local sheriff soon arrived on the scene and served seventy-five copies of a restraining order. But the men at the gates simply threw them into the rushing spillway. Then they picked up the sheriff and carried him in a sitting position back to his car.

The city next tried to get warrants for the arrest of the demonstrators. But the valley judge, sympathizing with the ranchers, declared himself disqualified to act. The men at the spillway were left to laugh at the law.

Exasperated, the Los Angeles water department sent a request for help to neighboring sheriffs in southern California. Their combined forces were then offered in support of the Owens Valley sheriff. But he was busy pleading with Governor F. W. Richardson to call out the National Guard—an idea which the Governor steadfastly resisted.

By this time the stand at the Alabama Gates had

become a grand picnic for the valley settlers. Up in Bishop practically every store was closed. On the flagpole in the center of town hung a large sign: "If I am not on the job, you can find me at the aqueduct." At the gates, ranchers and businessmen gathered about campfires in cheerful conversation while their wives brought hot meals from nearby homes. The congenial crowd had swelled to fifteen hundred, many of whom had brought stoves, tents, and beds. On the fourth day they had a barbecue, entertained the sheriff, and even invited the city's own aqueduct employees.

But later on their intensity of purpose returned. Gathered earnestly around the fires, the farm families passed along hymn books brought by the Baptist minister of Bishop. Soon the mighty strains of "Onward, Christian Soldiers" floated across the valley. For these stalwarts, Satan was a city, and they battled for the Lord.

That righteous refrain was not lost on the outside world. The story of California's little civil war was headlined across the nation and featured as far away as France and Sweden. Throughout the state, resentment against the upstart city of Los Angeles put sympathy on the side of the farmers. Even in Los Angeles sentiment was divided, though William Randolph Hearst's *Examiner* charged that the seizure was the "big card in a gigantic holdup scheme."

By no coincidence, Wilfred Watterson was in Los Angeles when the demonstration occurred. Meeting with his fellow bankers of the Clearing House Association, he addressed them for an hour, recommending the outright purchase of the Owens Valley Irrigation District. Here, of course, was the principal aim of the valley plan. Los Angeles might call it a "holdup," but the embattled farmers believed they were simply giving forceful emphasis to their plea to "buy us all or leave us alone." Since Los Angeles had not listened, they had done something to make it listen.

But for Wilfred Watterson the Los Angeles bankers had short words. Unless he got the gates closed, they are said to have told him, they would cut off his bank's credit. They agreed, however, to use their "best efforts with the business interests of this city to bring about an equitable settlement." Back to the valley went Watterson. Meeting with leaders of the spillway crowd, he asked them to disperse in response to the promise of the Los Angeles bankers. After holding the water supply of a great city in their hands for four days, they went back to their homes.

While the negotiations immediately following the gate seizure came to nothing, the valley people had made one point: they had convinced the Los Angeles water board that it could not afford to get its water from a hostile community. Up to Owens Valley went a top city representative to assess the situation. Returning, he went before the water commissioners and told them the bitter truth.

"The only way to settle things up there," he said, "is to buy out the rest of the valley."

"My God!" cried one of the members. "How much will that cost?"

"Five or six million dollars," was the cool answer.

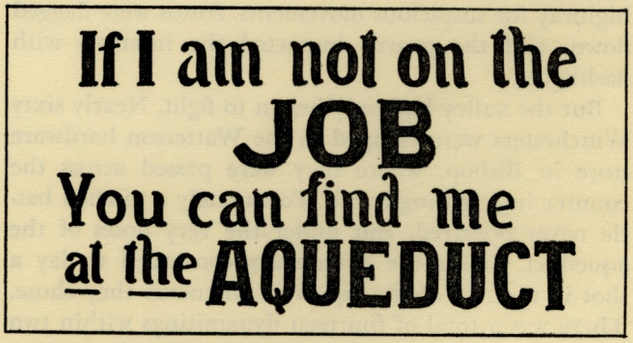
Such a figure was far above any previous water investment. It meant both a tacit admission of past mistakes and a partial concession to the Watterson group. But early in 1925 the commissioners said they were ready to buy all land tributary to the Owens River.

Within a few days, Wilfred Watterson was in Los Angeles negotiating the sale of a large "pool" of property on the Bishop Creek ditch. By the end of March the city bought the entire length of the canal. It looked as though the valley people had brought the city to terms, and that the long war was over.

But one issue had never been cleared up. For years valley merchants had demanded "reparations" from the city to compensate for the loss of customers who had sold their homes and departed. Except for its offer to improve highways to attract tourists to the valley, Los Angeles coldly refused to accept any responsibility. The bitter question raged all the way to the state legislature at Sacramento, where the valley secured passage of a law to hold the city accountable. But Los Angeles officials then insisted that nothing could be done short of a test case in court. The valley people, with the farmer's inherent distrust of lawyers, refused to launch one.

Still another sore was reopened in the negotiations for city purchase of the last of the big ditches, the Owens River Canal. With only $41,000 separating the two sides in a $2,500,000 deal, the talks suddenly burst into loud recriminations. The Watterson brothers and one of the city men almost came to blows before they were separated. Almost immediately after the negotiations were broken off, city wells in the Bishop area

MRS. H. N. CLEMENT



Merchants in Bishop, center of valley resistance to the aqueduct, took part in the seizure of the Alabama Gates in November of 1924, leaving this sign at the town's flagpole.

were dynamited, and another "shot" was planted in the side of the aqueduct.

After a temporary truce, the war had erupted more furiously than before. For weeks valley people were gathering their forces for what one of them called "the last stand." On March 19, 1927, they opened their campaign with a full-page ad in leading newspapers of the state, describing the valley's struggle under the heading, "We Who Are About to Die." Four days later the city replied by announcing a deadline beyond which it would not buy Owens Valley land. City agent Leahey was horrified.

"If you do that," he warned, "they'll start dynamiting again."

Ten days after the deadline passed, a valley rancher bought a large amount of blasting gelatin at the Hercules Powder plant in Martinez, California. A final letter was sent to various Los Angeles officials and civic groups demanding action before the city's policy would "inflame real American citizens to violence." When no answer had been received in two weeks, the violence began. Ten men descended on No Name Siphon, one of the largest pipe sections on the aqueduct, and blew it up. While the culprits escaped northward, the whole flow of the conduit gushed into the desert. Rushing up from Los Angeles to repair the break, the furious Mulholland told reporters he could not comment "without using unprintable language."

Close upon this blow, the dynamiters placed two more shots against the aqueduct system. With his entire aqueduct threatened, Mulholland at last decided to fight back.

Northward into Owens Valley rattled a special Southern Pacific train loaded with a hundred armed men—veterans of World War I. Up and down the aqueduct they mounted their stations. When their arrival was greeted with another blast the following night, reinforcements came immediately. The lower valley along the line of the conduit was virtually under martial law. At night searchlights scanned the highway for suspicious movements. Autos were flagged down, and the guards inspected the interiors with flashlights.

But the valley had only begun to fight. Nearly sixty Winchesters were shipped to the Watterson hardware store in Bishop, where they were passed across the counter into willing hands. Fortunately a pitched battle never occurred. But under the very noses of the aqueduct guards the dynamiters continued to lay a shot in the ribs of the aqueduct whenever they chose. There was a total of fourteen dynamitings within two months; "shooting the duck" had become the leading outdoor sport of Owens Valley.

Reeling from these blows, the Los Angeles water department turned its attack on the leaders of the valley, the Watterson brothers. Early in August two of Mulholland's men entered the Sacramento office of the state corporation commissioner.

"We have reason to believe," one of them reported solemnly, "that corporate funds are being used for dynamiting the aqueduct."

That night, at the request of the corporation commissioner, a state banking investigator caught a train for Owens Valley. What he discovered at one of the Watterson banks in Bishop surprised even the Los Angeles officials. Wholesale juggling of books had left the bank and various other Watterson enterprises approximately $2,000,000 short. An incurable speculator, Wilfred Watterson had sunk fortunes in unsound industrial ventures, and to cover his losses had tapped personal funds entrusted to his care by lifelong friends and neighbors. To the city water people, this explained his ravenous appetite for Los Angeles money—explained, too, his refusal to take the valley's fight into a court of law. Convicted of embezzlement on November 11, 1927, both the Wattersons were sent to San Quentin prison. The bewildered valley people suddenly found themselves without leadership.

Los Angeles had won a greater victory than it had expected. Moving to make a final valley settlement, it bought the remaining Owens Valley Canal in 1929. The following year the Angelenos voted $12,000,000 in bonds to "clean up Owens Valley"; with this huge fund the city bought up practically all the town properties in Big Pine and Bishop. Though the purchases took place in the Depression, Los Angeles paid boom prices that had prevailed in 1923—the year that its invasion made its first impact on the valley.

To the Angelenos it was an expensive and even embarrassing program—constituting an admission of gross errors in Owens Valley. To the valley people who had spearheaded the fight against the city it could be considered a final victory; they had won a fatter settlement than those who had sold out in the beginning. But to most of the settlers, who wanted only to live out their lives on the land undisturbed, it was a tragic ending to a bitter feud. As they piled their belongings onto their cars and headed out of Owens Valley, they could echo Jeremiah's lament: "Our inheritance is turned to strangers." Wrote one of them, "It is not the loss of the home, or the garden . . . or the growing business which has been the test; it's the loss of the years, and the hope and the endeavor . . ." In the stunted remains of abandoned orchards, Angelenos may still see the swath their city cut in its inexorable drive for water—and bigness.

The exodus from Owens Valley was not lost upon

California's literati. Not since Longfellow's *Evangeline* had the dispossession of a people been the source of such pathos. Embattled critics charged that the aqueduct was conceived by the San Fernando land syndicate purely to reap swollen profits at public expense; that Los Angeles "forced the ranchers to sell to the city at condemnation prices and get out"; that it took water from the river forcibly without a legal right.

Even the Owens Valley people made no such claims. Fred Eaton and no other had conceived the Owens River project. In practically every case ranchers sold to the city because they were offered highly attractive prices. Los Angeles took extreme care to establish legal water rights from the beginning, and for several years it was prevented from using part of these rights because of forcible diversions by some of the ranchers.

But surely the Owens Valley episode offered Angelenos little cause for pride. At the beginning the city used questionable political methods to kill federal reclamation efforts in Owens Valley, gain rights of way, and hold water filings; it failed to build a reservoir at the head of the aqueduct that would have prevented the water crisis of the 1920's; and for several years it pursued a policy of buying only the water rights it needed, without accepting responsibility for the effect of this invasion on either the economic life or the morale of the Owens Valley community.

By the mid-1930's Los Angeles was moving to write the last chapter to its adventure by correcting an early mistake. Long Valley, the reservoir site, was purchased from Eaton and his associates, and the big dam was constructed in the gorge. Completed in 1941, it created Crowley Lake, which stores enough water from year to year to have supplied both city and valley back in the turbulent twenties. At the dedication ceremony one valley spokesman looked back over a generation of tumult and pronounced a weary finale:

"We cannot but regret that this enterprise was not constructed long ago; there would have been less of history to forget . . ."

Poetic justice would be served if it could be reported that the Long Valley Dam has made possible the rebirth of Owens Valley—that the farmers have returned to the land and are pushing back the sagebrush with orchards and green fields. It is tempting to declare that the one million dollars Fred Eaton had demanded for his reservoir site would have been cheap compared to the millions paid for Owens property.

But the relentless growth of Los Angeles has blasted the chances of any such conclusion. To provide more water for the mushrooming city, the aqueduct was extended farther north to Mono County; and although the total water supply is far more than even Eaton and Mulholland first visualized, the city's insatiable thirst has likewise grown. There is still insufficient water for a guaranteed supply to Owens Valley farms. What little agriculture is attempted depends upon short-term leases that permit the city to withhold the water at any time. Though early construction of the Long Valley reservoir might have averted a water war, Owens Valley would eventually have been sacrificed anyway.

Today the valley is sustained by the stock-grazing economy it knew before the farmers dug their canals—and by a growing tourist trade, for eastern California has become a year-round playground for the very people who once were its worst enemies. Because of Owens Valley water, Los Angeles grew to the two million population promised by Mulholland. Now the valley's contribution to the city's growth is coming back in the form of tourist dollars. Angelenos, once afraid to identify themselves in the valley, are welcomed as paying customers. Supported by this commerce, Owens Valley today boasts more permanent residents than it did before it came under the shadow of Metropolis. But it is no longer the home of frontier farmers breathing the exhilarating air of self-reliance. It is a tributary province to the city it helped to build.

In addition to his recent Los Angeles: Mission to Modern City, *of which this article forms a part, Remi Nadeau has written three other books on California history, among them* The Water Seekers *(Doubleday, 1950).*

Statement required by the act of August 24, 1912, as amended by the acts of March 3, 1933, July 2, 1946, and June 11, 1960 (74 Stat. 208) showing the ownership, management and circulation of AMERICAN HERITAGE, published bimonthly at New York, N. Y., for October 1, 1961.

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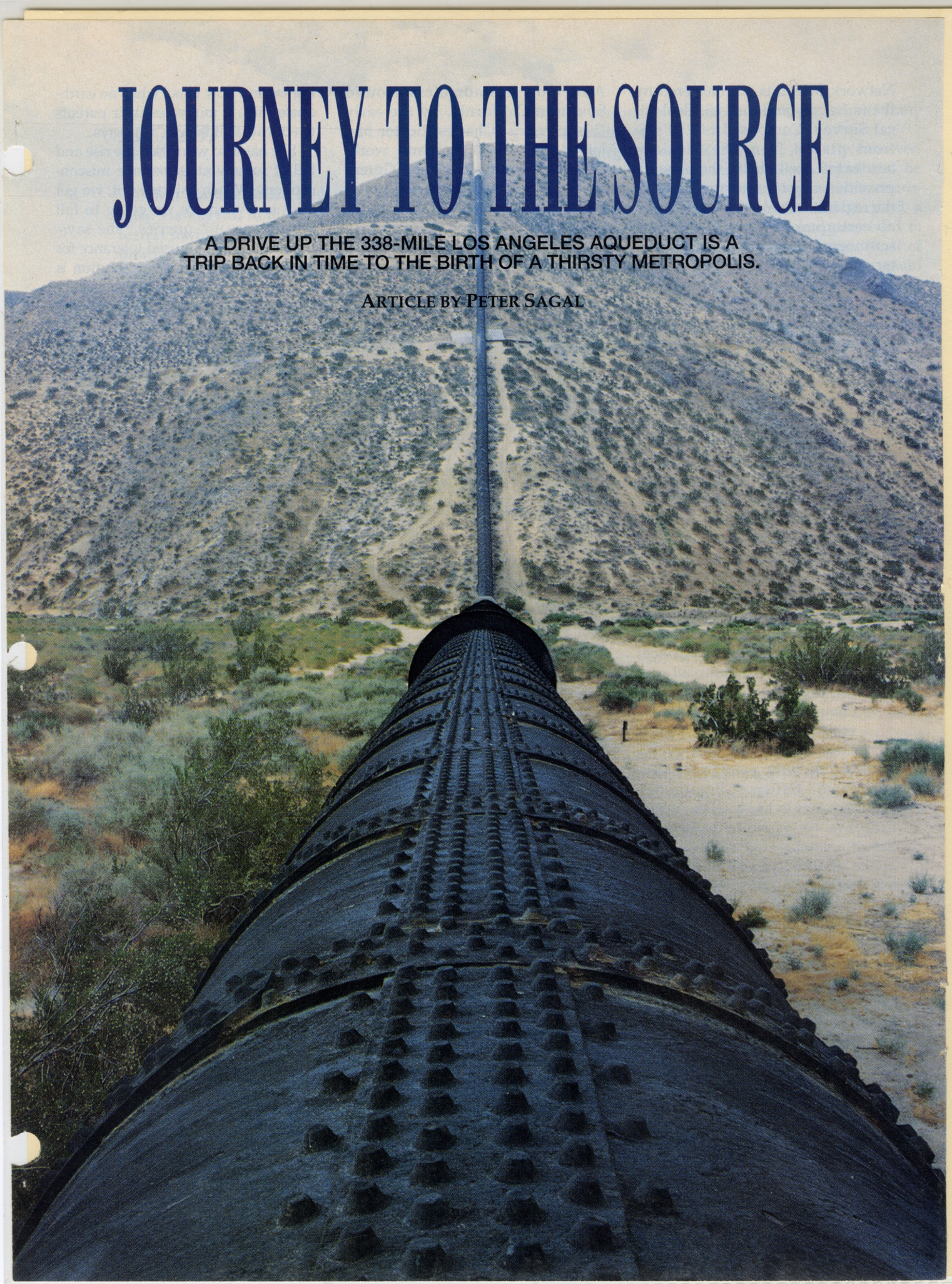
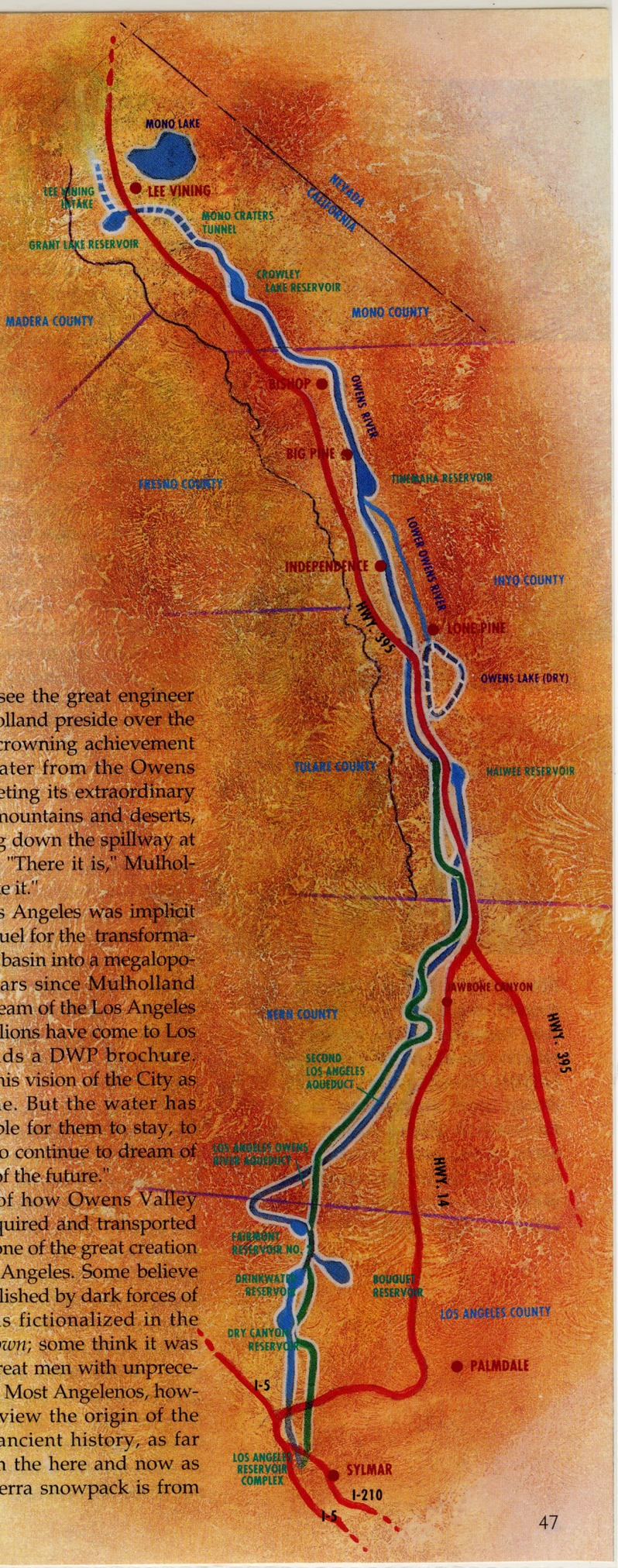
5. The average number of copies of each issue of this publication sold or distributed, through the mails or otherwise, to paid subscribers during the 12 months preceding the date shown above was: 331,410. Signed, James Parton, Publisher. Sworn to and subscribed before me this 6th day of September, 1961. [Seal] Lawrence P. Sweeney, Notary Public (my commission expires March 30, 1962).

JOURNEY TO THE SOURCE

A DRIVE UP THE 338-MILE LOS ANGELES AQUEDUCT IS A TRIP BACK IN TIME TO THE BIRTH OF A THIRSTY METROPOLIS.

ARTICLE BY PETER SAGAL





This is a time-travel story. It begins with a birth and ends with a resurrection. It goes from now to 90 years ago and back to the present; it starts in Los Angeles and ends more than 300 miles away. The only thing that remains constant in all this space and time is the flow of water, incalculable amounts of it—water for swimming pools and water for farms, water that can transform a desert into a paradise.

Modern Los Angeles was born at a spot in Sylmar, just uphill from where the Golden State Freeway starts to climb out of the San Fernando Valley and into the Santa Susana Mountains. A boulder squatting behind a locked fence marks the place; a plaque on it reads, "This is the terminus of the Los Angeles Owens River Aqueduct, bringing you water 338 miles from the slopes of the eastern Sierra Nevada."

Above the boulder, a pair of wide spillways, called the Cascades, spreads down the hill toward the recently built Department of Water and Power filtration plant. It was on November 5, 1913, that 30,000 people gathered here in their holiday best, with picnic baskets, bunting, banners and bands, to hear speeches and music and to see the great engineer William Mulholland preside over the climax of his crowning achievement as the first water from the Owens Valley, completing its extraordinary journey over mountains and deserts, came splashing down the spillway at his command. "There it is," Mulholland said. "Take it."

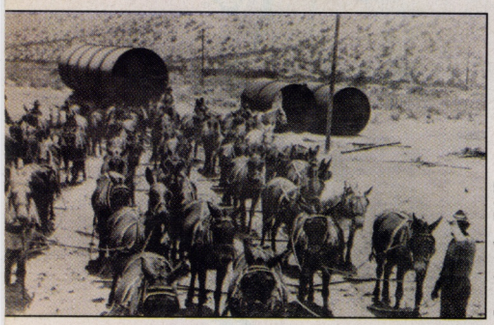
Modern Los Angeles was implicit in that water: fuel for the transformation of the dry basin into a megalopolis. "In the years since Mulholland realized his dream of the Los Angeles Aqueduct, millions have come to Los Angeles," reads a DWP brochure. "They shared his vision of the City as an ideal home. But the water has made it possible for them to stay, to flourish, and to continue to dream of the greatness of the future."

The story of how Owens Valley water was acquired and transported here remains one of the great creation myths of Los Angeles. Some believe it was accomplished by dark forces of conspiracy, as fictionalized in the movie *Chinatown*; some think it was the work of great men with unprecedented vision. Most Angelenos, however, simply view the origin of the aqueduct as ancient history, as far removed from the here and now as the eastern Sierra snowpack is from

Peter Sagal

Los Angeles DWP

Los Angeles DWP



Los Angeles DWP

After surveying the water needs of Los Angeles, engineer William Mulholland (top) responded with his visionary solution. More than 100,000 workers (middle) labored section by section, through desert and mountain, to set the mammoth pipeline in place. Mule teams (above) were invaluable in hauling the 30-ton segments of pipe needed to piece together the 8,095-foot Jawbone Canyon siphon.

the water in their kitchen taps.

But the fact is that Los Angeles still gets 70 percent of its water from the Owens Valley and the Mono Basin to the north. I wondered what it was like, the place our water flows from. And I wondered what the aqueduct means to those descendants of farmers and ranchers who had to step aside so Hollywoodland could happen—not to mention the Miracle Mile, Sherman Oaks and Van Nuys. I decided to go investigate.

My first stop was the most recent addition to the aqueduct system, the filtration plant in Sylmar. The high-tech facility was opened in 1986 to treat water flowing through the first and second aqueducts (the second, parallel pipe was opened in 1970). The plant's main building contains glossy displays about the history of the aqueduct. LEDs mounted on maps light up to trace the water's route; back-lit photos show pristine mountain creeks in the Sierra Nevada. Professional tour guides, wearing knit shirts with the slogan Quality Water From Quality People embroidered over their hearts, lead school groups to and fro, using portable amplifiers that allow them to be heard over the sound of the pumps.

The story told here is one of historical inevitability. "We live in a desert," reads the caption beneath a picture of sagebrush and dirt. "Water makes it habitable," reads the next caption, underneath a photograph of gleaming skyscrapers. There is no "before" and "after" view of the Owens Valley.

From the filtration plant, I head north on the Golden State Freeway through Valencia and on to San Francisquito Canyon, the site of the second-greatest disaster in California history (after the San Francisco earthquake of 1904) and the end of Mulholland's career. In a dry, unpopulated part of San Francisquito Road, halfway between the DWP's Power Plant No. 2 and Power Plant No. 1 farther north, some large boulders stick out of the ground, lighter in color than the surrounding hills. Closer examination reveals rusty bits of steel-reinforcement bar sticking out of the old concrete.

Mulholland, still firmly in charge of the city's water 10 years after the momentous day at the Cascades, decided to build a dam and reservoir along the aqueduct here in the mid-1920s to provide a backup supply in case of a mishap farther upstream. On March 12, 1928, the foreman of the St. Francis Dam, as it was named, called Mulholland to report a leak. The supervisor drove up, inspected the dam and pronounced it safe. A few hours later, the man on watch at Power Plant No. 1, a mile upstream from the dam, made the following entry in his logbook, after pages and pages of routine checks of generators and spillways: "1:20 A.M., Spanbower reports that dam has gone out. Lake is dry." The lake roared down through the valley, killing everyone at Power Plant No. 2 as well as 400 people living in the canyons below.

The city compensated the survivors and the victims' families, a new, safer reservoir was built at a different site, and the St. Francis Dam disaster was gradually forgotten; today there is no memorial or marker. But Mulholland's guilt broke him apart. "I envy the dead," he said. "Don't blame anyone else; you just fasten it on me. If there is an error in human judgment, I was the human." Although Mulholland was retained as a senior consultant by the city until his death seven years later, he never built again.

From San Francisquito Canyon, I parallel the aqueduct's double barrels down to the Antelope Valley and then cut across to Route 14 to rejoin the water in Mojave. From there, the aqueduct stretches across the foothills of the Tehachapis, curving northeast toward the wide mouth of the Owens Valley. An hour or so out of Mojave, I detour up a paved road into Jawbone Canyon to see a particularly impressive part of Mulholland's handiwork. The vast drop in elevation between the Owens Valley and Los Angeles allowed him to build a completely gravity-fed system, but he had to deal with various obstacles en route, such as mountain ranges (he tunneled through them) and canyons like Jawbone. Here, he built a thick pipe that drops down

one side of the canyon and narrows in diameter as it reaches the bottom, creating a high-pressure internal nozzle that shoots the water up the other side. The siphon, huge, black, covered with rivets, drapes across the canyon like a jump rope dropped by God. Despite the signs warning me to stay at least 100 feet away because of the high pressure, I put my ear to the inch-thick pipe, and I swear that I can hear water shooting past.

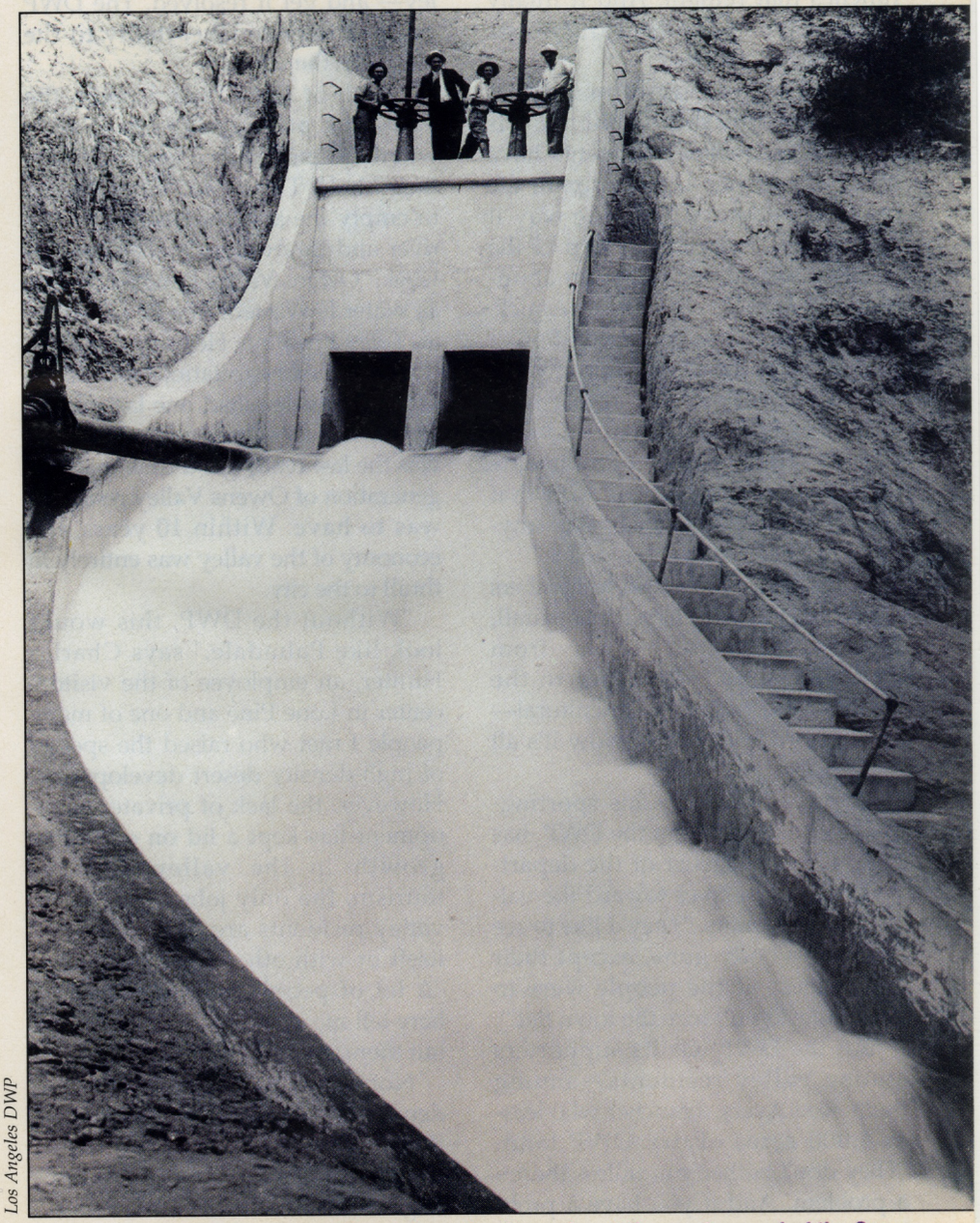
After an hour or so on Route 14, I intersect with Route 395 and head north, cutting through the rocky desert plateau that blocks off the south end of the Owens Valley. The mountains on my left get higher and higher, and the pipes of the two aqueducts snake across the foothills; the lower hills to my right close in, and I cross into Inyo County, the flat and dry floor of the Owens Valley, where the city of Los Angeles owns more than 95 percent of the land.

Mulholland first came here with Fred Eaton, a former mayor of Los Angeles and the true mastermind behind the aqueduct scheme. Legend has it that Eaton, himself an engineer, concocted the idea on a camping trip and returned with Mulholland to share his "discovery": a valley with little annual rainfall awash in water because of the hundreds of streams flowing down from the Sierra and into the Owens River. The river dead-ended in Owens Lake, a saline lake at the south end of the valley—a lake that must have looked like a very poor piece of engineering to Mulholland and Eaton. They set about correcting it. Eaton began buying up land with water rights from Owens Valley residents who believed that he was acting on behalf of the U.S. Reclamation Service and that the land was to be used as part of a federal irrigation project. When Eaton turned around and sold most of it to the city of Los Angeles, the ranchers, farmers and businessmen of the valley cried foul; but it was too late. Appeals to the federal government brought no help to the valley residents; the credo of the Progressive Era was The Greatest Good for the Greatest Number, and the greatest number clearly lived in Los Angeles. And so the aqueduct was begun.

At the end of my first day of traveling, I arrive at Owens Lake, which dried up only 13 years after the aqueduct first diverted its supply of water. Now an expanse of alkali flats, its dust storms cause problems for valley residents with respiratory ailments. It occurs to me that I've already seen this lake, in the reservoir behind the filtration plant back in Sylmar: It's just been moved to a more convenient location.

Lone Pine, the southernmost of the four towns of the Owens Valley, has a long memory. The town now caters to tourists who are on their way north to Reno or Mammoth and the many who stop here to hike up Mount Whitney, which towers above the town a few miles to the west. But thanks to the city of Los Angeles, which won't allow development on the Owens Valley land it owns—and it owns almost all the land—the town looks much as it did back in the 1920s, when Relles Amick was a little girl.

"There were four of us children, and we heard this noise outside," recalls Amick, now 68. "My mother closed all the blinds in the house and told us to stay down. And she told us that the people going by were



Los Angeles DWP

On November 5, 1913, a torrent burst down the Cascades at the western end of the San Fernando Valley to signal the birth of the Los Angeles-Owens Valley water connection.

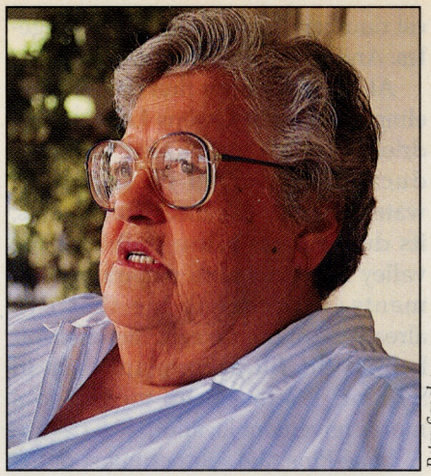
going to blow up the aqueduct." The 1920s in the valley saw the Water Wars, when residents violently protested the increasing diversions of their water to Los Angeles. Although the attempt Amick remembers didn't work out, many others did; eventually, with people in Los Angeles and across the state joining the demand for compensation for the people of the Owens Valley, the city agreed to buy out all the remaining farms and businesses at market prices. Thus, the city of Los Angeles became an almost-imperial power in the valley, an unlikely landlord for the businesses and ranches that remain. And it finally became free to take water to its thirsty heart's content.

Today, local opinion on the DWP's stewardship of the land is divided. Some older residents have misgivings when they compare the present landscape with the way it used to be. "A lot of this part of the country was all swampy, an abundance of water," remembers Amick. "In 1934, '35, they had a wildflower contest up at the school, and my sister and I walked out about four miles [outside of town] and just starting picking flowers alongside the road—and my sister won that year. You just don't have that anymore. It's heartbreaking to see it."

Daniel Harris, 65, also remembers a greener past. "When I was small, you could drive all the way from here to Bishop"—40 miles to the north—"and it was all agricultural—alfalfa, corn and wheat. Now it's all sagebrush."

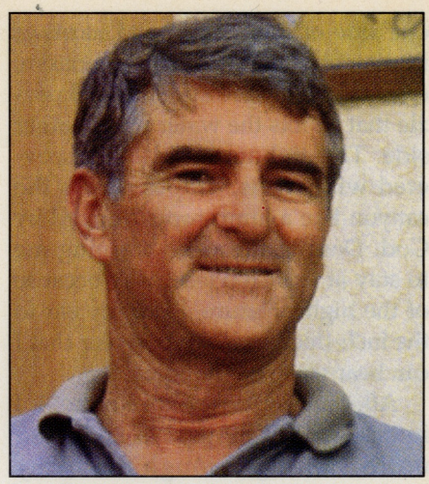
Harris, who rents his sporting-goods shop from the DWP, has a deep distrust of the department's motives toward the valley residents. "They'd like to see everybody gone, except their employees—if the people were to move, they'd bulldoze the town flat."

But the DWP has its supporters among valley residents—among them, Rod Ayers, a rancher who leases 4,000 acres of dry DWP land. "They don't bother you unless there's a problem. And if you have a problem, you can go to Bishop"—where the DWP is headquartered in the valley—"and get it resolved. The DWP contributes wholeheartedly to the people in the valley."



Peter Sagal

Relles Amick remembers the Water Wars.



Peter Sagal

Gary Rossi supports the current water plan.

North of Lone Pine, I rejoin the aqueduct at the Alabama Gates, where 70 men drove up in 1924 in their Model T's, opened the spillways to empty the aqueduct back into the river and threw a party that lasted a week. "Owens Valley Ranchers Picnic as Water Is Wasted," read a *Los Angeles Times* headline. Hearing that their demands for negotiations would be met, the revelers had one last picnic, closed the gates and went home. It was the last really good time that that generation of Owens Valley residents was to have. Within 10 years, the economy of the valley was entirely in thrall to the city.

"Without the DWP, this would look like Palmdale," says Charles Hunter, an employee of the visitors center in Lone Pine and one of many people I met who raised the specter of high-density desert development. However, the lack of private development has kept a lid on economic growth in the valley. Besides tourism, the only jobs available to valley residents are with the DWP itself or with other public agencies. "A lot of people who used to live here tell me they want to come back, but there's no work," Amick says.

North of the town of Independence and about a half mile east of Route 395 is the original aqueduct intake, the extent of Mulholland's original vision. It turned out, however, that the local people were able to divert water into their own canals north of here. As a result, the city was forced to buy them all out during the turbulent '20s and extend the works northward. Now, the original aqueduct's source is a neglected spot, just another slab of concrete along a massive network of similar structures. However, in aerial photographs, you can see how at this point the river's natural, meandering course is transformed into something with a purpose: It straightens out and heads for the hills, concentrating on its long and difficult journey to come. To Mulholland, this must have been the place where he saw himself reaching out his hand and touching the water, changing it, forcing it to his plan. The concrete spillway that he envisioned would be a thing of power.

I think back to November 1913, when the works that begin here first brought their treasure to the people of Los Angeles, and I realize that when Mulholland made his famously terse speech—"There it is; take it"—there might have been tears in his eyes, tears of joy and amazement at the possibilities inherent in his own hands. What was a bunch of farmers to the vision of his hands delivering this impossible gift, this river, to the thirsty multitudes of his home city?

"This is just a tiny valley," says rancher Gary Rossi. "You ever been to the San Joaquin Valley? Now, that's farming." Wiry and compact, the 50-year-old Rossi speaks with careful articulation.

Nothing irritates him more than people from away coming to the val-

The ultimate fate of Mono Lake is dependent upon the water diversion policies set by a metropolis more than 300 miles away.

ley and spouting off about the water. Rossi represents the fourth generation of his family to work this land; he leases 440 acres for his cattle from the DWP in Inyo County. His great-grandfather, Raffaele Rossi, arrived in the valley in 1882 as a child, became a rancher and eventually sold his land to Los Angeles.

Insisting that I get the whole picture of water use in the valley, Rossi takes me on an early morning tour of the Bishop Cone, the land around the town of Bishop that at one time was the valley's most fertile area. He points out ditches that have been dry for 60 years, ditches that used to be part of an intricate communal irrigation system; he passes an outstretched hand over barren landscape that used to be farmed by his ancestors. "Maybe your eye can't pick it out," he says, pointing at a hillside covered with scrub, "but to my eye that lighter-colored bank there was once irrigated land."

Rossi relates the history of his valley with no bitterness; in fact, he says that for many people, the city's purchase of the land was the best thing that ever happened. "Down south of Lone Pine, the land isn't very good, mainly DG [decomposed granite]. It's very hard to farm; I'm sure the people were glad to get their hands on cold, hard cash." However, in the late 1960s, Rossi went to Sacramento along with other ranchers to protest the DWP's plans to open the second aqueduct. "Before the second aqueduct, there was a lot of surplus water here. But the aqueduct drew its water from three sources: decreased irrigation, increased pumping of groundwater and increased diversions of Mono Lake. A lot of land here that had always been irrigated began to dry up."

Rossi and his fellow ranchers lost that fight, but Inyo County used a legal loophole to file a lawsuit in 1973, and after almost 20 years of negotiations, Inyo and the city of Los Angeles announced a negotiated agreement, a plan for water use that Rossi heartily supports. But the agreement has come under attack by certain public agencies, including the Federal Bureau of Fish and Game and—even more bothersome—various environmental groups, for which he has little patience.

"Should we go back 300 years, let the water go where it wants?" he asks. "When they bulldozed the orchards, the pear orchards and the apple orchards, the people who saw it were hurt—orchards are pretty to look at. But now we have all this

Continued on page 71

Journey to the Source
Continued from page 51

open space. If the land had remained in private ownership, we could have [had] factories—who knows? The population could be 70,000 rather than 7,000."

However, even Rossi voices regret that the DWP's control of the valley has been so extensive. But he staunchly refuses to wish for a world other than the one he's got. "I believe very strongly in private property rights," he says, defending the DWP's right to the water it legally owns. "We can't go back. We can't take 20 million people out of the state of California."

North of Bishop, as Route 395 crosses into Mono County and heads north to the Mammoth turnoff, the land rises into a plateau of volcanic tableland, which blocks the north end of the valley. I drive up a gradual ridge and then down into Round Valley, where Crowley Lake, the largest reservoir on the aqueduct system, hosts hundreds of fishermen who go after the trout put there for them by the state Fish and Game Department, which maintains four fish hatcheries in the valley on DWP land.

Fred Eaton, the original mastermind of the aqueduct, used to own this land—he wanted to build a private reservoir here so he could make his fortune selling water through the Los Angeles waterworks. Mulholland, appalled, refused, and the two friends, who had conceived this grand scheme together, did not speak for nearly 30 years. Eaton eventually retired to a cabin he still owned on the rim of the valley, forgotten by most, despised by those who did remember him. In 1932, he asked Mulholland to visit him. Mulholland, withdrawn in despair after the St. Francis Dam disaster, accepted. The two old men met here for the last time, looking at the great works they had created and which now had passed them by. They made their peace. Eaton died soon after, and Mulholland, before he died a little more than a year later, told his old friend. "The two of us were walking along—young and virile like we used to be. Yet I knew that we were both dead."

Even as Mulholland passed from the scene, his city thirsted for more water. In the 1930s, work crews bored an 11-mile-long tunnel through the volcanic ridge called the Mono Craters to tap into the feeder streams of the Mono Basin. These streams, like the Owens Valley streams of old, flowed into a terminal lake: a great salt basin, home to only flies, tiny brine shrimp, seagulls and migrating birds. To the engineers who followed in Mulholland's footsteps, it must have been yet another system that they could improve; and so they diverted four of its fresh feeder streams through their new tunnel and into the aqueduct. The thought of anyone caring about the decline of Mono Lake would have made them laugh.

"Mono Lake is far from a dead lake," says Rick Knepp, a staff member of the Mono Lake Committee, "and the Owens Valley is a shining example of what happens when nobody's watching out." The MLC, founded by biologist David Gaines in 1978, depicts the lake as a thriving ecosystem, essential to hundreds of thousands of migrating birds as they stop to feed and nest in their intercontinental commutes. The organization has helped win several key court decisions against the DWP; the last, in 1990, required Los Angeles to stop diverting water until the surface comes up to a level that scientists say will stop the erosion of the ecosystem.

The MLC hasn't completely won the respect of the people of the Owens Valley, who sometimes see them as interlopers, people from away who come and make a noise about trivial things. Yet the committee has had a real effect, leading a statewide movement toward environmental awareness that has caused the DWP to rethink its policies. "When the second aqueduct went on line in 1970, drawing more water from the Mono Basin, there was no investigation into the effect on the basin," says Dennis Williams, the DWP engineer in charge of the aqueduct. "There was no private or public understanding of the ecological effect. We now recognize that the Mono Lake ecosystem needs to be protected. Several years ago, we realized that we need to manage our resources better. . . . Changing times bring changing polices."

Four days after leaving Los Angeles and 338 miles away from the boulder with its plaque, I stand on top of the northernmost point on the aqueduct system, the intake on Lee Vining Creek—the end of the line. It's another concrete spillway, built across a stream that comes down from the mountainous Tioga Pass. I'm 20 miles from Yosemite Valley, 200 miles due east of the Golden Gate Bridge. The water flowing under my feet, through this construct of my home city, would normally flow back along that vast distance to my water tap in Los Angeles, to factories in Northridge, swimming pools in Beverly Hills. But the channel leading to the DWP's reservoir is as dry as Owens Lake. Instead, the water flows straight downhill, along its original course. I drive alongside it to Lee Vining, under Route 395, through the yards of a Cal Trans station, down into a grassy crevasse. The road ends; the stream keeps going.

I park my car, get out and run to the end of a ridge. From there I can see the water of the creek flowing, useless and perfect, into Mono Lake, its surface just beginning to glitter in the setting sun. The DWP and the MLC are still wrangling over numbers as they negotiate the minimum elevation for the lake; and down in the Owens Valley, the bureaucrats and the activists are chipping away at Inyo County's agreement with the DWP. Ninety years after Eaton and Mulholland first dipped a tin cup in the Owens River, discord still resonates in the valley. But Lee Vining Creek flows again into Mono, the migrating birds, unperturbed by the debate, skim the lake in pursuit of flies, and the water—imperceptibly, slowly, quietly—rises again. W

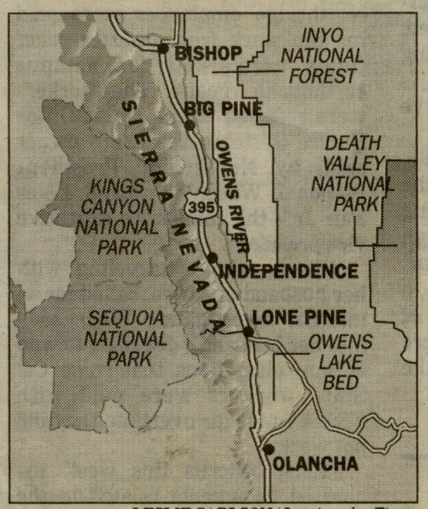
L.A. Times

The Owens Irony

L.A. water grab may have saved what the valley values most

After years of foot-dragging and fruitless litigation, the city of Los Angeles in 1994 gave up some of its pristine eastern Sierra water supply to save Mono Lake. Then, in 1997, the city ended a 20-year legal struggle with Inyo County and agreed to limit groundwater pumping that was destroying vegetation in the Owens Valley. And now, Los Angeles has agreed to control toxic dust blowing from the dry bed of Owens Lake—dry because Los Angeles diverted the Owens River from the lake and sent its waters 233 miles south through the Los Angeles Aqueduct to city faucets.

The lake bed dust is the last major grievance resulting from Los Angeles' infamous appropriation of the Owens River and its tributaries beginning in 1903. Throughout this saga, the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power has incurred the hostility of Owens Valley residents, some of whom dynamited the aqueduct in the 1920s and waged David-and-Goliath legal battles from the 1960s into the 1990s.



LESLIE CARLSON/ Los Angeles Times

The Owens Lake dust probably caused the DWP the most grief. Settlement of the issue has brought a measure of peace to the valley not seen in decades—especially since the agency settled voluntarily rather than, as in the past, fighting to the last drop.

Even so, the Owens Valley remains a form of colonial outpost under the control of Los Angeles. The city owns virtually all the land in the 100-mile-long trough between the Sierra Nevada on the west and the White Mountains to the east. The four valley towns—Bishop, Big Pine, Independence and Lone Pine—are landlocked in the Water and Power barony of 350,000 acres in Inyo County and adjoining Mono County. The towns can grow only if Los Angeles gives up land. Up to now, the city has disposed only of some small parcels within the towns themselves. Most of the land is leased to ranchers as pasture, without any water rights.

In 1997, the city agreed to sell up to 75 acres adjacent to the towns for public or private use. The Inyo County Board of Supervisors now is assessing the needs and potential uses for the land. Some residents talked about using the property to lure newcomers, perhaps Angelenos seeking to escape the frenzy of city life.

But Greg James, the Inyo County water director, says he senses no strong demand for growth. Most locals like the remote, sparsely populated region just as it is. Nor do Owens Valley's 18,000 residents seem to resent the fact that Los Angeles owns so much land.

For decades, Los Angeles was vilified for turning verdant farms and orchards into desert by secretly buying up the land and draining it of its water. Today, the visitor often hears that the water barons inadvertently saved the valley from the overdevelopment and overcrowding that has plagued so much of California. This dichotomy led Abraham Hoffman to title his book on the Owens Valley water grab "Vision or Villainy."

Call it accidental vision. Los Angeles took the water to fuel its own growth while the valley withered and stagnated. But in time, Owens Valley became a natural outdoor recreation wonderland and is likely to remain so. As Greg James said, "I suspect this will still be a very nice place 75 years from now."

A look back at the L.A. Aqueduct's construction

Museum's 2013 calendar chronicles historic moment in valley's past

By Jon Klusmire
Special to The Inyo Register
12-6-2012

The Eastern California Museum's 2013 calendar features more than a dozen photos of various phases of the construction of the Los Angeles Aqueduct. Work on the 238-mile long aqueduct started in 1908 and the massive project was completed in 1913. Once complete, the aqueduct conveyed the waters of the Owens River to Los Angeles, a task it is still performing today.

The calendar is the first of several projects the museum is planning to commemorate the Centennial of the L.A. Aqueduct. Throughout 2013, plans call for exhibits in the museum, educational programs, a speaker series and a film series, all of which will explore the construction of the aqueduct itself, and the far-reaching ramifications completion and operation the structure created in the Owens Valley.

However, the 2013 calendar focuses solely on construction of the aqueduct in Inyo County, and features numerous Aqueduct-related photos that have either never been seen, or are rarely shown.

For instance, one photo shows the Aqueduct Intake completely flooded by a rebellious Owens River, much to the chagrin of the worker standing in the water. Another photo shows a young couple perched on the bucket of a huge steam shovel. A skeletal-looking floating contraption with what appears to be wings reaching over the sides of "the ditch" is a suction dredge.

A fashionably dressed Bessie Van Norman stands in stark contrast to the rough and unglamorous Aqueduct Intake in February 1913 after christening the structure with champagne. She was married to Harvey Van Norman, who supervised construction on several sections of the aqueduct. Photo courtesy ECM

The electric-powered dredge was used to work on the 21-mile stretch of "unlined" aqueduct, from the Intake across from Aberdeen to the Alabama Gates, north of Lone Pine. Bessie Van Norman, in her formal Victorian dress, stands at the intake after christening the structure by breaking a bottle of champagne on its concrete gates. A rather motley looking crew of aqueduct workers are shown in one of the many work camps along the aqueduct's route. At any time, up to 5,000 men were working to build the aqueduct. A beehive of activity is shown in the photo depicting crews working to pour concrete in the "lined" section of the aqueduct.

The calendar is available at the museum, 155 N. Grant St. in Independence, and costs $10 (to receive a calendar by mail, send a check for $14 to cover postage and tax to ECM, P.O. Box 206, Independence, CA 93526). The calendar is also available at the Bishop and Lone Pine chambers of commerce, Spellbinder Books and other museums and businesses in the county.

The 2013 calendar was made possible by the ongoing support of the Eastern California Museum by the County of Inyo Board of Supervisors; a generous donation from the non-profit Friends of the Eastern California Museum (www.fecm33.org), and a special donation from Coso Operating Company – Terra-Gen Power, LLC, which operates the Coso Geothermal Plant, in Inyo County, and is one of the largest producers of renewable energy in the West (www.terra-genpower.com).

For more information, or to order a calendar, email ecmuseum@inyocounty.us or call (760) 878-0258.

The VALLEY of BROKEN HEARTS

an echo from

THE OWENS RIVER VALLEY

Our valley was a pleasant place
'Till twenty years ago,
Made fertile and productive
From Owen's Rivers flow.
With water from the river,
And years of fruitful toil
Our fathers made an Arcady
From barren desert soil.

The valley was lined with orchards,
Wide fields of golden grain
Great droves of sheep and cattle
All swelled the farmers gain.
Far off across the desert
A mighty city saw
How they might get our water
Yet keep within the law.

At first, they asked what little,
"The surplus flow would serve"
Besides to help our river
Our floods they would conserve.
But once they had their entrance,
With promises so sly,
Their one relentless purpose
Was to drain the valley dry.

Our people did not want to sell,
But they were poor and weak.
With lying tongues the City worked
The tactics of the sneak.
To some they paid so high a price
They could not choose but take it
So wove a chain that others sold
Because they could not break it.

Old friendships snapt beneath the strain,
And brother hated brother.
Then when a quarrel softened down
The City fanned another.
And now they have the water,
The arid desert reigns,
Where homes and towns and farms prevailed
The hungry wolf complains.

Our orchards are all barren,
Our country they have flayed,
The district school yard's empty
Where little children played.
The houses . . . they are empty,
With window panes all out,
This helps to make a City Great
Of this there is no doubt.

To see the homes we've treasured
To desolation go,
The scene is most heart breaking
It never should be so.
Most everything's been taken from us,
They have laid our country bare,
The Sierras . . . they're still with us
Mother Nature placed them there.

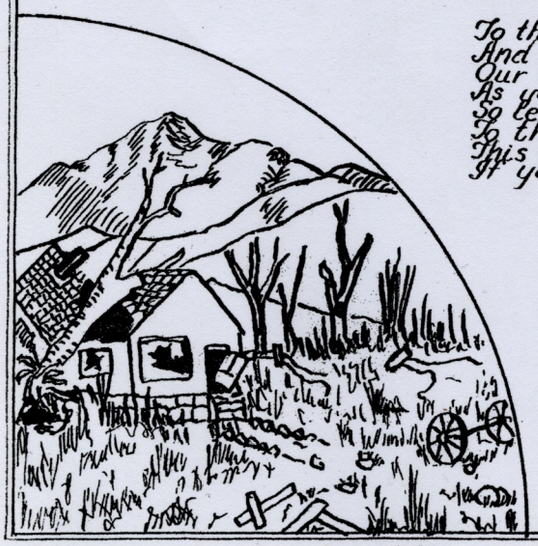
One by one our friends have left us,
Gone away to other climes,
But they'll never find another
Like the one they've left behind.
'Round these faded hopes of ours
Fond memories remain.
We who are left must soon depart,
Other homes to claim.

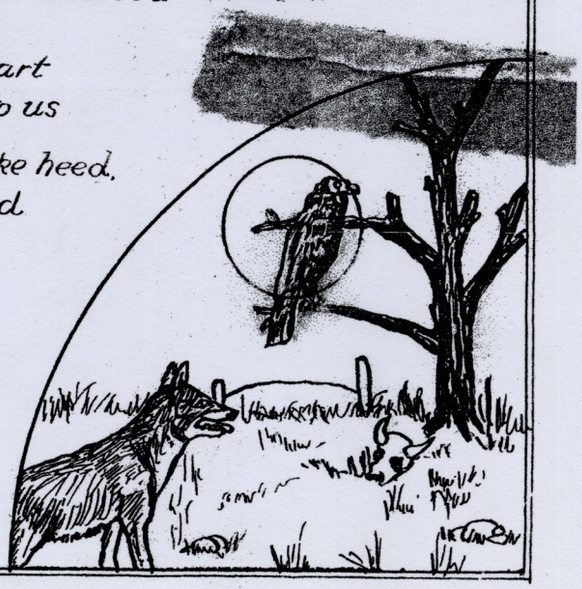
And o'er our precious loved ones
May God his vigil keep.
They've passed into that valley
Of everlasting sleep.
Some could not stand the worry,
They could not carry on,
And they're resting 'neath the shadows
Of the once beloved Mt. Tom.

To those of you who had a part
And this job helped to do
Our homes are just as dear to us
As your homes are to you.
So let this be a lesson
To the States who would take heed,
This City will be after you
If you've anything they need.

By

HAZEL M. PARTRIDGE





DECORATIONS

by

Charles Lorin Roy

Author's presentation to show how Owens Valley has been shaped by its link to L.A.

3-7-2013

Special to The Inyo Register

John Walton, the author of the most thorough book about how the Owens Valley has been shaped by its tumultuous, century-long, water-fed relationship with the City of Los Angeles, will be the guest speaker at the Friends of the Eastern California Museum's annual meeting this Saturday, March 9, in Independence.

The public is also invited to meet Walton beforehand, starting at 4 p.m., when he will be at the Eastern California Museum, at 155 N. Grant St., in Independence, for a reception and to sign copies of his well-known book, "Western Times and Water Wars: State, Culture, and Rebellion in California."

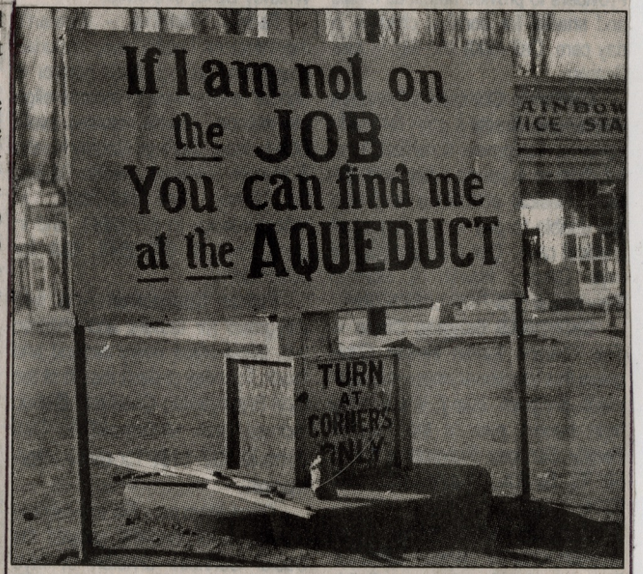
The FECM's annual meeting will be held in the Independence Legion Hall, at the corner of Edwards (U.S. 395) and Kearsarge streets. A potluck dinner will start at 5:30 p.m., followed by a brief business meeting, then Walton's presentation. The public is invited to the potluck and presentation.

"Western Times and Water Wars" does more than simply recite the history of the Owens Valley and the "water wars" with L.A. Walton uses the specifics of the Owens Valley's past to show how larger, regional and national trends not only impacted the Owens Valley, but also had parallels in the development of the West.

The "Army of Occupation" at the Alabama Gates in November, 1924. Photo courtesy Eastern California Museum

However, he notes that the Owens Valley is rather unique in the West because its history has been so closely intertwined with L.A., thanks to the city's successful effort to secure most of the valley's water rights and send that water south via the L.A. Aqueduct, starting in 1913, to feed the growing, thirsty city.

That event created almost a perpetual state of rebellion in the Owens Valley for the past 100 years. The rebellion took various forms. Most visible was the "occupation" of the Alabama Gates in 1924, which saw hundreds of Inyo County residents take over the gates and turn the water into the valley floor. Dynamiting and other acts of sabotage also garnered lurid headlines. Generating publicity, sympathy and, often, support from other entities not enamored of L.A., would be one of the area's more successful tactics, whether it involved the city's export of water in the 1930s, the "draining" of Mono Lake in the 1970s, or the dust storms coming off the Owens Dry Lake in the 2000s.



This sign in Bishop shows the widespread support for the protest at the Alabama Gates in 1924, which attracted hundreds of residents but did little to resolve the Owens Valley's "water war." Photo courtesy Eastern California Museum

After the initial, violent protests, the valley's residents also used state law and the courts in the 1930s to advance their cause and, in some cases, put limits on the actions of L.A. Those initial legislative and legal victories (including one limiting groundwater pumping in the Bishop area) created the template for the current legal framework of the Long Term Water Agreement and other legal actions involving the Owens Valley and L.A.

But Walton, who is a professor of Sociology and Anthropology at the University of California, Davis, also puts those "unique" events in a broader historical context.

For example, the settling of the valley and conquest of the native Paiutes followed patterns familiar throughout the West. Federal policies and laws provided free land, and the U.S. Army subjugated the Paiutes, clearing the way for the pioneers to settle the valley. Once the Paiutes were subdued, they were excluded from the valley's political and legal life. They did, however, play a critical role in the local economy by virtue of providing the agricultural workforce that powered the area's farms and ranches.

Mining and railroad development, as in much of the West, required outside investors and capital. The mines pumped up the local economy, but their chief beneficiaries were the mine owners and mining stock manipulators. And the booms were inevitably followed by busts or shutdowns, which rattled the local communities. Thus, decisions about the fate of the local mining industry were made by absentee corporations or investors, who paid little attention to the impact those decisions had on the county's towns and residents.

Regarding major water-related decisions from a political point of view, President Teddy Roosevelt had multiple objectives and saw multiple benefits, to himself as a politician and to his Progressive Movement, when he approved L.A.'s plans for the Aqueduct over protests from Inyo County residents. That decision, and the creation of the Inyo National Forest shortly afterward, introduced the Federal Government as a player in the valley and its development, a role which only expanded along with the region's national forests, parks and public lands.

So, whether it was the City of L.A., absentee mine owners or the federal government, the citizens of the Owens Valley had little to no say about many of the most important decisions about their land, water and economy.

Ironically, one of those outside forces, the national environmental movement, became the biggest ally of the Owens Valley. Walton details how, starting in the 1970s, state and national environmental laws set the stage for successful legal action by Inyo County, the Mono Lake Committee and other organizations that started to restrain the water-gathering practices of L.A. The ramifications and impacts of those legal tussles and disputes continue to this day.

Municipal League of Los Angeles

Bulletin

LIGHT ON YOUR CITY'S AFFAIRS

VOLUME 1 JULY 15, 1924 NUMBER 12

LOS ANGELES CALIFORNIA PUBLIC LIBRARY

The Owens Valley "Revolt"

R. E. Chadwick, member of the Executive Committee of the Municipal League, very generously donated his time, his car and his expert skill as driver, so that, with him, Secretary Pratt and Associate Secretary Borough might make a thorough investigation on the spot of the difficulties that have arisen over water between the city of Los Angeles and the dwellers in Owens River Valley.

Following are the findings of the three investigators as reported to the Executive Committee of the League by Associate Secretary R. W. Borough at its meeting Friday, July 11th.

May 6, at 1:20 a. m., the Los Angeles aqueduct was dynamited several miles above Lone Pine in the Owens Valley, Inyo County. The explosion ripped out a spillway gate and tore loose large pieces of aqueduct concrete near the gate, depositing them on both sides of the ditch. The sloping wall of the aqueduct, however, was damaged only above the present flow line. No water was lost to the city. The break was quickly repaired by the city's water department at a cost of $2,500.

News of the event brought Los Angeles County investigators into the valley. Sheriff Charles A. Collins, of Inyo County, who, at the time, was hunting for an aged pioneer lost in the mountains, hurried back to Independence. He found public sentiment so inflamed, he says, that he was unable to obtain information justifying arrests and further could not have secured convictions if the arrests had been made.

A Warning

The dynamiting, according to Inyo County residents, had been planned, not to destroy Los Angeles' water system, but to warn the city to stop dealing with the ranchers individually for their land and water rights.

Shortly afterward, an "order" to leave the country was directed to three men, said to have acted as Los Angeles agents in the forbidden purchases: George Watterson, uncle of W. W. Watterson, of the Inyo County Bank, but, unlike his uncle, friendly to the city; William Symons, a former official of the McNally Ditch company; and L. C. Hall, attorney, all residents of the Bishop district.

The same ultimatum was delivered to George Warren, of Big Pine, farther south in the valley, but Warren's fellow townsmen are said to have warned the Bishop contingent to keep hands off and the sheriff announced: "This business of running folks out of the valley has got to stop."

Despite the sheriff's efforts at "pacifying" the valley, the visitor hears much of impending "civil war."

Issue Not a Simple One

Discounting much of what he hears as sheer bluff, an abservant visitor must nevertheless admit an ugly situation. And an important factor is the city's program of the past 18 months of buying out the ranchers individually with the result that those who refuse to sell are isolated in areas containing farms which the city has allowed to lapse back to semi-desert conditions. But the conclusion that this is the only factor should not be too quickly drawn. The Owens Valley story is not a simple tale of a big city wronging a few ranchers.

In the first place, it should be noted that sentiment in the southern end of the valley, including the towns of Big Pine, Independence, and Lone Pine, is friendly to Los Angeles.

A merchant in one of these towns takes this typical view:

"The city has paid good prices for the land it bought around here. The people as a whole are satisfied.

"Land in the valley is of little value agriculturally. It approximates only a crop every two years. Winds and frosts interfere with fruit and when there is a good crop there is no price.

"Further, distance from Los Angeles, our market, prevents us from competing with other growing areas in Southern California. Los Angeles is a cheap market.

"The city has brought into the lower end of the valley cheap light and power.

"This country's future lies in developing the Los Angeles tourist trade. We make more money sitting here and selling the tourists gas and other things than we could make raising cheap alfalfa."

Five Somewhat Distinct Groups

To understand the unfriendly feeling in the northern end of the valley, we must consider at least five groups: the Eaton Land and Cattle Company, the Inyo County Bank, the Longyear Ranch interests, the Southern Sierras Power Company, and the dirt farmers.

First, as to the Eaton Land and Cattle Company.

Dealing with the ranchers individually, the city has bought the following percentages of stock in the Owens Valley canal and ditch companies:

Big Pine 96 per cent, A. O. Collins 96, Dell 100, Rawson 45, George Collins 100, Lower McNally 82, Upper McNally more than 50, Farmers 15, Bishop 23, and Owen's River 2 per cent.

The theory on which the city proceeded was that, to the extent of its stock ownership, it would be able to reduce diversion of water upon Owens Valley lands, keeping the water in the river and passing it into the aqueduct intake below Big Pine. It has so far failed in its purpose. It has spent around **$3,500,000** in the purchase of land and water rights and it has reduced diversion on the upper ditches only to have the river's resulting extra flow spread upon the land irrigated from the ditches below.

To determine its rights to this water and to prevent its diversion by the ranchers the city has brought suit against 18 canal companies and individuals in the valley. The case is set for trial August 18 in the superior court of Inyo County at Independence.

The Eaton Land and Water Co.

"We feel," says S. B. Robinson, special counsel for the city, "that when the case is finally settled the city will receive a very substantial part of the water now coming down the river."

And that is just the culmination which the Eaton Land and Water Company and its owner, former Mayor Fred Eaton, would, naturally, NOT want.

Eaton owns **17,000** acres in Long Valley on which his cattle now graze but which would be flooded if water were to be piled up in the valley behind a 150-foot dam. Residents of Bishop estimate its value for grazing purposes at from $10 to $15 an acre, giving a figure of from $170,000 to $255,000 for the whole, but Eaton's estimate, according to report, is much higher. He is reputed to have set the price, first at **$900,000,** then at **$1,500;000,** and finally at **$3,000,000.**

His interest, it will be seen, would logically dictate opposition to any policy that might develop water for the city without the bulding of the high dam.

The Wattersons as Bankers Only

Second, as to the Inyo County Bank and the Watterson brothers.

This bank holds mortgages on 141 farms in the valley, aggregating $452,050 and bearing interest at rates varying from 8 to 13 per cent. Individual bargaining results in isolating unpurchased ranches in areas that will revert to a relatively unimproved condition. Land values that existed by reason of the community life are thus wiped out. The Wattersons would be expected to resist any move that might threaten the security of their mortgages.

In addition to this direct interest, they are also indirectly involved through ownership in Bshop commercial establishments and through loans to merchants. They do not want to see the town slip back as a trade center.

The Wattersons as Land Speculators

But we must differentiate between the Wattersons in the role of defenders of their mortgages and their merchant profits and the Wattersons trying to maneuver the city into a position in which it may be forced

to pay exorbitant prices for valley land to be "dried up" as well as heavy damages for loss of value to town properties.

The Watterson group says it wants the city to deal with the valley interests collectively and that as to price it will abide by the decision of a "fair valuation commisson" composed of "dstinterested business men". But **Harry A. Glasscock,** editor of the Herald, a Bishop newspaper, and spokesman of the Watterson group, said to Municipal League representatives:

"We won't deal with the public service commission because they are not decent men."

When the League's secretary asked the editor if the valley wouldn't have to deal with the public service commission ultimately, he replied heatedly:

"The Hell we do—well, then, we won't deal at all."

Power Through Control of Credit

The Wattersons, it should be further remembered, would be in a dominating position among the groups dealing with the city "collectively." Their voice would be heard more loudly than the ranchers in the deliberations. Through their power of mortgage foreclosure and their direct or indirect control of the local press (property of Harry A. Glasscock, of the Herald, is mortgaged to the Inyo County Bank for $1,500) they are in a position to whip public sentiment into line and silence open opposition to their views. **The first consderation of Los Angeles should be to get right, and stay right, not with the Wattersons, the Longyears, the Eatons, or the Southern Sierras Power Company, but with the actual wealth producers of the valley, the dirt farmers.**

As to the Longyear Interests

The record owner of the so-called Longyear ranch, formerly the Inyo Syndicate ranch, is D. M. Longyear, son of W. D. Longyear, vice-president of the Security Trust and Savings Bank of Los Angeles. Elsewhere in this bulletin we have an article discussing this group under the caption, "What Longyear Wants".

The Longyear interests had in mind extensive subdivision and improvement schemes at the time the city began buying in ranches 18 months ago. If the city deals with the valley interests collectively for the purpose of buying out the 28,000 acres around Bishop, as the Wattersons propose, it seems certain the Longyears will insist upon recognition of values purely speculative.

The Southern Sierras Power Company

This corporation, according to representatives of the city, wants to sell out to Los Angeles. Its holdings in the Mono basin north of Owens Valley and on the Owens Gorge and Bishop Creek are a long way from its market in Riverside and San Bernardino counties, requiring 450-mile transmission, and. as its power sales are made in small blocks to small towns and scattered ranches, its system is alleged to be uneconomical.

Water development in the Mono Basin, tied into the proposed Long Valley reservoir, would give Los Angeles, the company's friends claim, 200,000 horsepower on the Owens Gorge and 140,000 horse-power in San Francisquito canyon—a total of 340,000 horsepower as against 70,000 horse-power developed on the aqueduct now.

Reliable figures as to the probable cost of this project are not at this time available to the League's representatives.

The subject is raised here to indicate the community of interest of the power corporation in question and some of the groups opposed to the city's acquiring water rights by individual bargaining with the ranchers. If such bargaining had succeeded, Long Valley storage would have been unnecessary for the time and without this storage the argument for the city's purchase of the power corporation's system loses force. Mono Basin development by the city would have to be tied into Long Valley storage if its highest productivity as to power and water is to be achieved.

It is highly significant, too, that one of the "eminent engineers" whom the newspapers opposing the public service department have quoted most widely in favor of Long Valley storage is **Thomas B. Means,** consulting engineer for the Southern Sierras Power Company.

Farmer Also Speculator

Finally, as to the bona fide ranchers. What is their case against the city?

Inquiry among them disclosed two attitudes, often expressed by the same individual, one of which may be summed up as follows:

"Leave us alone. You're ruining our homes. You city folks may not know what homes mean but we do and we're going to fight for them. Stop buying us out or there'll be civil war."

Sympathy for this attitude should not prevent an accurate statement of the situation. It is not true, as some people suppose, that Los Angeles completely "dries up" the purchased lands. The city endeavors to lease these lands and in a series of normal years might divert water generously upon them for the benefit of its tenants. But even under these favorable conditions, the ranchers point out, the improvements and the character of the community would not compare with the results obtained when the land is worked by an owner.

The other attitude, expressed by some of the ranchers, is very little different from that of the speculator. **Among some of the valley residents protesting loudly their desire to be left alone there is a surprising willingness to sell—at the right price!**

Price Expected If City Buys

W. R. McCarthy, district engineer of the Inyo County Irrigation District, recently formed to take over the Owens Valley irrigation ditches, gives the land that might be purchased by the city as follows:

Under McNally and Sanger Ditches	4,500 acres
Under Rawson Ditch.....	4,500 acres
Under Owens River Canal.....	19,000 acres
Total	28,000 acres

And he adds: "Eighteen thousand acres of it is cultivated highly. Ten thousand acres is grazing land. It would cost the city **$300** an acre right straight through."

That McCarthy represents the sentiment of a considerable percentage of the land owners in the irrigation district is probable.

What about this price?

Prominent Realtor's View

Mr. Joralmon, of the Campbell-Joralmon Company, of Los Angeles, recognized authorities on farm land values in Southern California, says:

"Good alfalfa land in the Owens Valley is worth from $200 to $250 an acre; pasture land, from $50 to $75. I sold good land up there two or three years ago as low as $85 to $100 an acre.

"You can't buy good alfalfa land around Chino, 38 miles east of Los Angeles, for less than $450 to $500 an acre. I should say Owens Valley land is worth about half as much.

"The money in alfalfa is in feeding it. Chino feeds it and ships fresh milk into the city. Owens Valley, because of the distance, can't do that. Chino therefore gets about twice as much for its butter fat as Owens Valley."

A city official states that, on 25,000 acres purchased in the past 18 months for a total price of $3,600,000, the city paid on an average four times the assessed valuation. He further says that on purchases on the McNally Ditch, including grazing and the other cheaper lands and totaling $1,079,000, the city paid on an average $140 an acre.

Mr. Joralmon's statement would seem to back up William Mulholland's contention that the city has bought "in a free, liberal way".

Moreover, it is well for Los Angeles citizens to remember that while the water department, through its agents, may have been tactless at times in dealing with the ranchers, it has never been charged with treachery to the city's interests.

Forced to Individual Purchasing

The unbiased investigator, too, will consider that individual purchasng by the city was a natural result of the factional strife that has troubled the valley for years. The early inter-ditch wars have left their legacy of sectional jealousies. Los Angeles has tried, and found it difficult, to deal with the ranchers collectively. Less than four years ago the city proposed an agreement with 11 ditch companies providing for the building of a 100-foot dam and the storage of Owens River and Rock Creek waters in Long Valley. Under the agreement, if the 100-foot dam proved feasible, its height was to be increased to 150 feet. A storage of **68,000** acre feet would have been made possible by the lower structure and of **340,000** acre feet by the higher. The plan, though endorsed by representative ranchers of the Associated Ditches, was blocked by failure of the ranchers to reach an agreement as to water rights, the contention being that it would not assure the ranchers sufficient water in a dry year.

In fairness to the public service department it should be further remembered that in serving the community which it represented it was faced by two unexpected developments—the city's phenomenal growth and a series of unusually dry years.

Test Storage First by 100 Ft. Dam

As to the development of storage, it should be noted that the practicability of the 150-foot dam proposed by the Eaton-Longyear-Watterson interests is open to question. Prudence would dictate that before the higher dam were built the city should assure itself of the possibilities of storage behind a 100-foot structure. The rock formation at the dam site is of such a character as to raise a serious question in the minds of William Mulholland and other engineres as to the permanency of storage of even the smaller reservoir.

A superficial examination by the League's representatives disclosed the fact that the rock at the point where exploration work was done in 1921 is of the variety known as tufa, of light and porous character and cut by deep fissures.

The view has been expressed that even if the larger reservoir had been provided it would have been empty now.

The question is one for engineers, not laymen, to decide and until it is decided, no fair-minded person would insist that the city suddenly plunge into a program that would, if carried out without delay, necessitate the city's purchase of $200,000 or $300,000 worth of grazing land at a fancy price of several millions of dollars. The city, it will be recalled, was blocked

THE OWENS VALLEY "REVOLT"

(Continued from Page 3)

by valley interests from building a 100-foot dam.

What City Has Done for Valley

Antagonistic sentiment around Bishop would not be so strong if the valley press were not closed to a presentation of the benefits resulting from the city's activities. Some way should be found to impress upon the residents the following facts:

The Southern Pacific's broad-gauge line from Mojave into the valley was built because of the city's contract with the road covering the hauling of materials for the building of the aqueduct. If it had not been for the aqueduct the valley would probably still be closed against the Los Angeles market, so far as direct rail transportation is concerned.

Sought Right to Pay Taxes

The city has been generous in its dealings with the valley as a political unit. Shortly after Los Angeles began operations there it recognized the injustice of the constitutional inhibition against payment of taxes by a municipality. Through the efforts of W. B. Mathews, special counsel for the public service commission, a constitutional amendment was adopted curing this defect. **Los Angeles today pays taxes on 110,000 acres in Inyo County, a little less than half the total of 260,926 acres on the county's tax rolls outside of cities and towns.**

The city's contribution to the support of local government has mounted from **$13,531.60** in 1910 to around **$70,000,** or about a quarter of the total taxes paid, in 1924.

Lands Getting Water at City's Expense

Loose use of the phrase, "drying up the valley," has led to a popular misconception of the real condition in the farming areas. There is no shortage of water for the farms still unpurchased. On the contrary, there is what might be generally regarded as wasteful use of water in many sections of the county. Excessive irrigation has water-logged lands and, in the absence of pumping, rendered them unproductive except as grazing areas. The city is in a position to help the ranchers out of this difficulty through regulated pumping if their co-operation can be obtained.

In the lower end of the valley an increase in population has followed the city's activities. Independence, the county seat and valley headquarters for the water and power departments, is admittedly more prosperous than it was eight or nine years ago.

Lucrative Tourist Trade

Cheap light and power have been supplied to Lone Pine and Independence and the agricultural and mining enterprises around these towns from the city's plans on Cottonwood Creek, the Haiwee Reservoir, and Division Creek.

The building of the aqueduct and the advertising and opening up of the valley that followed have been factors in increasing tourist trade with the restaurants, hotels, and other retail establishments in the Inyo County towns. The flow of money into the county from this source is large and most of it is from Los Angeles. It is estimated by one observer, a resident of the valley, that during the summer season last year the number of automobiles daily entering the county from the south was more than **400.** This would have a noticeably stimulating effect on the business of a community whose stable population totaled only **8,000.**

There is no doubt benefits along this line will increase as highways are improved and Los Angeles and Southern California become better acquainted with the marvelous beauties of this country of the snow-capped High Sierras.

What Longyear Wants

W. D. Longyear, a Director of the Los Angeles Security Trust and Savings Bank, is offering to the city **2,142.5** acres of land in the Owens River Valley that would be irrigated from the Bishop Creek. According to the Los Angeles and Owens Valley newspapers, he is asking **$250** per acre, or $535,625.00 for the entire ranch. According to a statement made to us by his son, D. M. Longyear, the Longyear Ranch and the 4c Ranch of some **2,480** acres, taken together, were offered to the city last fall at **$200** per acre. But Mr. Longyear, Jr., stated that the 4c Ranch land was not as good as the Longyear Ranch land so that a figure of about $250 per acre is probably what is expected by Mr. Longyear for his own ranch.

It was assessed in 1923 for **$78,240.00,** which figure included **$20,895.00** as the value of the personal property and improvements on the land. The land itself was assessed at **$57,345.00.**

Quality of Longyear's Land

Assessments are made on the basis of 50 per cent of the real value so that the property altogether should be worth twice $78,240.00 or $156,480.00.

A classification of the property gives the following: Alfalfa 20 acres, clover 6.25, corn 8.95, buildings and orchards 37.80, wild hay, grass and clover 289.80, wild grass and salt grass 801.65, brush and grass 769.20, brush 111.50, tules (swamp land) 73.95, willows 6.4, cleared land 4.65, highway 12.35 acres.

It will be seen that about 75 acres is under cultivation, the rest, or some 2,000 acres coming under the general characterization of grazing land.

A leading business man of Bishop gave $10 to $15 as the value of grazing land, when questioned as to the value of such land in Long Valley, some thirty miles north of the Longyear Ranch. At $15.00 per acre for such land in the Longyear Ranch, about $30,000 would appear to be a good price.

Why Pay Three Times Its Value

However, one of the Los Angeles real estate dealers who knows alfalfa land all over this section of the country, made this observation to us: "Good alfalfa land up in Owens River Valley is worth from $200 to $250 per acre. But those people up there have a habit of putting in damp pasture land as alfalfa land. Such land is worth from $50 to $75 an acre."

If we take the higher figure, or $75.00 per acre for the 2,000 acres of such land in the Longyear Ranch, we shall arrive at a figure of $150,000.00.. Adding $18,750.00, which is putting the other 75 acres in at $250 per acre (the price given above for the best alfalfa land) gives us a grand total of $168,750.00.

Why should Los Angeles, even if it wanted to buy, pay the $535,625 reported to be asked by Mr. Longyear, or $366,875 more than it would appear to be worth?

Letters to the Editor

DWP plans to sell Pines Cafe at public auction

This is in response to an article that appeared in the Aug. 14, 2012, issue of *The Inyo Register* about the Pines Cafe building located in Independence ("Indy's Pines Cafe as tourist attraction?").

As we have stated publicly and officially in the past, the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power (LADWP) is moving forward with plans to offer the Pines Cafe building and property for sale at public auction as soon as feasible. There are no plans to make any changes to the building, nor enter into any type of lease or joint-use agreement.

LADWP has an exemplary record spanning decades of working with the Owens Valley communities on many issues to promote better understanding and find mutually-acceptable solutions. It is our intention to continue those efforts to help make new inroads in our 100-year-old relations with the Owens Valley.

Sincerely,

James G. Yannotta,
Manager of Aqueduct,
Los Angeles Department of Water and Power

Aug 2012

'Celebrating' the Aqueduct centennial

I have argued for years that Inyo County has often been a willing enabler of the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power's abuses and that the Inyo-DWP relationship is best described as one of co-dependency. Now, it appears full-blown Stockholm Syndrome has set in!

I refer to the article in the Aug. 14 *Inyo Register*, in which readers learned that "the Eastern California Museum is planning an event to *celebrate* the 100 year anniversary of the aqueduct … [italics added]" and that Inyo County Administrative Officer Kevin Carunchio "suggested transforming the old Pines Cafe building into a temporary Aqueduct Museum …"

Every time the wind blows our lungs must "celebrate" the Aqueduct in the form of dust which lodges in them, hence the Eastern California Museum's planned Aqueduct celebration would be redundant. The proposed "temporary Aqueduct Museum" would also be redundant because we already have a permanent one. It is called "Owens Valley." Our dead trees, dried-up ditches, desertified meadows and weed-infested, abandoned agricultural lands tell the story of the Aqueduct with tremendous power.

Supervisor Cervantes had the best idea for the old Pines Cafe. He suggested a "guns and ammo shop." I propose "dynamite" be added to the "guns and ammo". This would provide one-stop shopping for anyone planning a historically informed celebration of the Aqueduct Centennial!

If we must have another Aqueduct Museum, I think the Inyo County Supervisors' chambers would be a more appropriate location than the old Pines Cafe. After all, the Supervisors seem to acquiesce to DWP most of the time. But it doesn't have to be this way. In June, two of thee incumbent Supervisors up for re-election were defeated and the third will face a runoff in November.

The cure for Inyo's case of Stockholm Syndrome lies in the hands of its voters. Let's hope those in the Fourth District finish the job and replace Supervisor Fortney.

Daniel Pritchett
Bishop

BIG ENTYMOLOGY • PILGRIMAGE TO THE EASTSIDE • FICTION • POETRY

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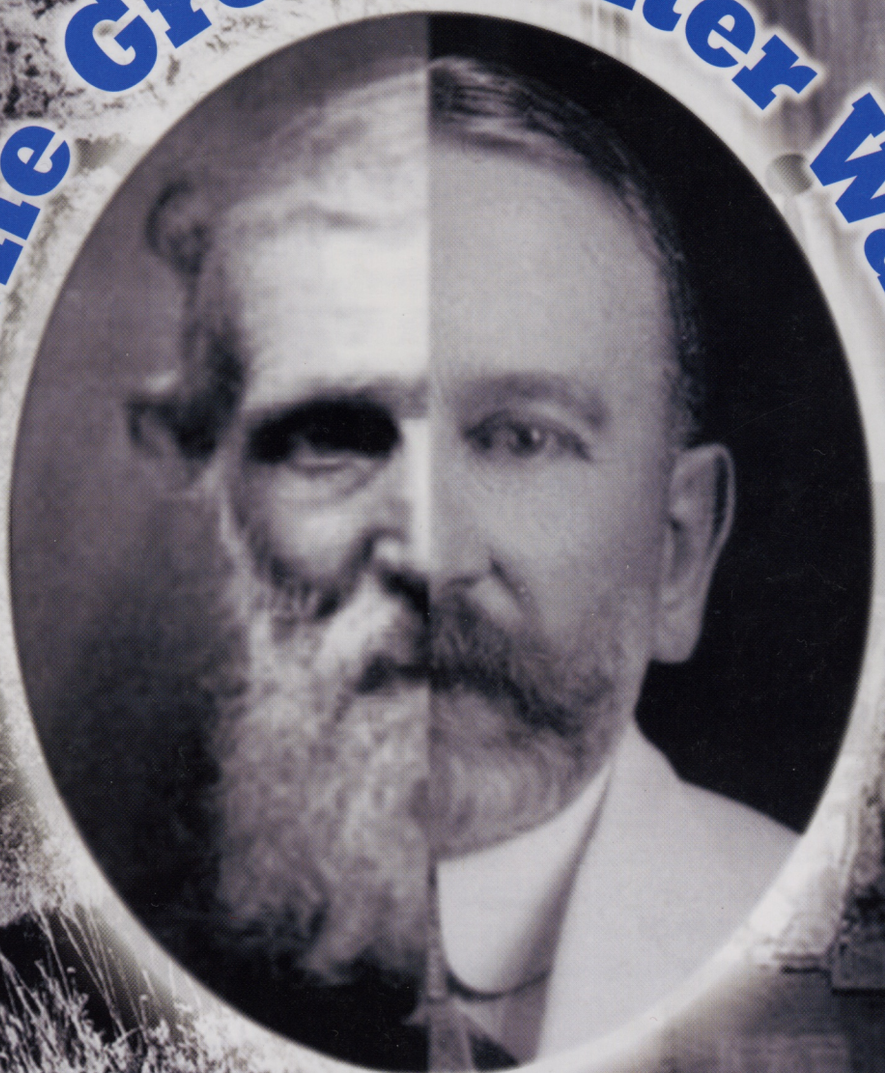
The Great Water War



John Muir
Hetch Hetchy broke his heart

James Phelan
Hetch Hetchy made his name

THE VOTE THAT IS 100 YEARS LATE

This November, voters will finally have a voice in the decision to dam Yosemite's Hetch Hetchy Valley

By Lyra Pierotti

John Muir was 76 years old when he died. He was not young, but some suggest that he died an untimely death. Not of disease or illness, but of heartache. He had lost the one he loved dearly. Not a woman, but the Hetch Hetchy Valley.

Hetch Hetchy got its name from an edible grass described by the local Sierra Miwok tribe. It was once a lush and beautiful meadow, with thundering waterfalls feeding the quietly graceful Tuolumne river; not unlike Yosemite Valley. Indeed, Muir himself said he had "always called it the 'Tuolumne Yosemite,' for it is a wonderfully exact counterpart of the Merced Yosemite, not only in its sublime rocks and waterfalls but in the gardens, groves and meadows of its flowery park-like floor."

That is, until it was corked, flooded, and declared to be the property of one faraway boomtown. Never again would any person view Yosemite Valley's cousin, save for in old black-and-whites—or imagined under the 300 feet of water.

Of curious coincidence, John Muir died on Christmas Eve of 1914, just one year after San Francisco was granted the right to dam the Hetch Hetchy Valley, and thus forever entomb it as the city's own water tank.

The original debate

It took an epic earthquake to change people's minds.

Several wealthy city officials had long favored claiming the Hetch Hetchy Valley as their own, to promote the development of a grand, innovative and cultured city. San Francisco had the potential to be one of the greatest urban centers in the world. And indeed, their prophecies were correct. All they needed was a steady, reliable source of water. They certainly weren't thinking of Apple or Hewlett-Packard that long ago, but they knew the cornerstone of any great civilization: water.

The idea of damming a national treasure was not popular at the time, but with enough persistence, those who favored progress and considered all of nature's resources to be for the benefit and exploitation of humans eventually got their way.

Newspapers were alight with the issue, and highly critical.

In 1913, the *New York Times* wrote, "Why the City of San Francisco, with plenty of collateral sources of water supply, should present an emergency measure to the special session of Congress whereby it may invade the Yosemite National Park is one of those Dundrearian things that no fellow can find out… Why should [Hetch Hetchy Valley's] inspiring cliffs and waterfalls, its groves and flowery, park-like floor, be spoiled by the grabbers of water and power?"

In response, those who favored the dam painted the "preservationists" as inhumane, with the once-mayor of San Francisco, James Duval Phelan, going so far as to say of John Muir, "I am sure he would sacrifice his own family for the preservation of beauty. He considers human life very cheap, and he considers the works of God superior."

If the land was not of some use to humans, whether for timber, water, or gold, it was not, in their view, being used to its full potential. So, in 1913, Congress passed the Raker Act, granting the city of San Francisco the right to erect the O'Shaughnessy Dam and flood the Hetch Hetchy Valley.

San Francisco had many other available sources of water, both locally and in the Sierra, which would not drown a national treasure; but in an era rife with Manifest Destiny and human progress above all else, the allure of Hetch Hetchy was far too strong. Perhaps it was the pride in such a feat of engineering; perhaps it was moneyed interests eyeing the potential profits off power and water.

In retrospect, it was the 1906 earthquake and resulting fires which devastated San Francisco that drove the first nail into Hetch Hetchy's coffin. After such a catastrophic event, it became easier to sway public opinion in favor of the dam. Who wouldn't want a perfectly reliable water source after a tragedy like that?

And in grander retrospect, perhaps it was the local corruption and power struggles in San Francisco that really doomed Hetch Hetchy. Had the Spring Valley Water Company not had a monopoly on water, perhaps the City could have developed its local water sources more readily.

Hind sight may not yet be 20/20 in this issue. Much of the debate rages on, and again

Looking up Hetch Hetchy Valley from Surprise Point - Photo by Isaiah West Taber. Taber Photo, San Francisco.
Photo: Sierra Club Bulletin, Vol. VI. No. 4, January, 1908, pg. 211. (This photo was accompanied by The Hetch Hetchy Valley by John Muir.)

it appears to be San Francisco city officials versus the rest.

The debate today

Would you like Hetch Hetchy water with that?

It's a question you might get at one of San Francisco's many restaurants. You might even find a bottle of Hetch Hetchy Mountain Water. Willie Brown, when mayor, promoted the filtering and bottling idea as a way of generating revenue for the City. It's not available outside of San Francisco—that would violate the Raker Act, which also mandated that no private profit could be made on water from the Hetch Hetchy reservoir since the source was on public land.

In all of this, we see the words "Hetch Hetchy" everywhere.

It's Hetch Hetchy water we're drinking.

Hetch Hetchy water is so clean and pure it runs unfiltered from the Sierra straight to your tap in San Francisco.

This is one of the main problems, explains Mike Marshall, Executive Director of the nonprofit Restore Hetch Hetchy. It is *Tuolumne River* water; not Hetch Hetchy water. The source is the river, *not* the reservoir (much as your eggs come from a hen, *not* the grocery store).

In the effort to raise awareness about the Hetch Hetchy restoration proposition, this is their greatest roadblock: restoration efforts are not threatening to take San Francisco's water away, nor are they asking for the dam to be removed; they are simply asking that the water be stored in other existing reservoirs, where it won't destroy land that was set aside as part of a National Park, and intended for the enjoyment of all Americans—not just San Franciscans.

As part of her Master's thesis, Sarah Null, now an assistant professor in the Department of Watershed Sciences at Utah State University, studied the feasibility of uncorking the reservoir, shifting the water storage to other existing reservoirs, and thus opening the door to restoring the Hetch Hetchy Valley. Null is quick to say that the Hetch Hetchy water system is a beautiful one: A marvel of (then-)modern engineering, traveling by gravity, generating power along the way, which has needed little maintenance over the years.

But, Null says, "dam-building, thinking only in terms of water storage, that's really the solution of 1960, it's not necessarily the solution of 2060." Just as the damming of Hetch Hetchy was seen as the solution of progressives at the time, we are now at a time in history where the City can continue to lead the way in forward-thinking progress.

The dam, while controversial, succeeded in making San Francisco a grand city. Now, as the public's values shift and we find ourselves moving toward the unknowns of climate change, San Francisco could address its own role in public land use, as well as the long-term reliability of its water source.

This forward thinking would fit right in with the City's long history of innovation and progressive politics—a history, ironically, attributed to the dependability of its water source.

The O'Shaughnessy Dam flooding the Hetch Hetchy Valley in Yosemite National Park. **Photo: Wikimedia Commons**

Currently, the city's legal filtration avoidance status saves it heaps of money: the water from Hetch Hetchy is so pure and clean they do not have to filter or treat it extensively before delivering it to your tap (never mind that San Francisco's rate of Giardia, an infection contracted from a pathogen often found in rivers and reservoirs, is 370 percent higher than the state average). Null concludes in her thesis that "removing O'Shaughnessy Dam could increase Bay Area drinking water costs significantly, to levels common for most California cities." Not more.

Null cites many viable alternatives to storing water in Hetch Hetchy. "There is more storage space along the Tuolumne River" than it could fill in any given year, she explains, and part of the solution could be to further utilize other surface reservoirs along the Tuolumne River, such as the New Don Pedro Reservoir. Local water conservation is also key. Today, San Francisco recycles none of its water.

Not a drop.

Their pure, clean water, so revered it was bottled and sold to local consumers, not only runs freely from every tap; it is also flushed down every toilet, and used to wash the streets of their impurities.

Even Orange County, often denigrated by those in northern California for its hydrologically defiant reliance on water from the upper reaches of the state, recycles 92 million gallons of water every day.

The antiquated piping of the Hetch Hetchy water delivery system has been long neglected by city officials who took its reliability for granted and siphoned off maintenance funds to finance various local projects. Now they are in need of costly seismic upgrades, repairs, and general maintenance. Voters recently authorized the Water System Improvement Program (WSIP) to address these concerns.

This November, the voters of San Francisco will be given the opportunity to vote on a ballot initiative that would require city officials to fully investigate the feasibility of restoring Hetch Hetchy, and asking that the study be funded by a small portion of the money allocated for the WSIP.

No restoration projects yet—just running numbers and ideas around. The voters would have another chance to decide on the restoration project once we know more about what it will entail.

Spanning ideological boundaries, the restoration of Hetch Hetchy has been pursued through the years by such big names as Don Hodel, Reagan's Secretary of the Interior. It also has surprising adversaries, such as Senator Diane Feinstein who considers the reservoir to be San Francisco's "birthright." To get the public voice, this initiative will go straight to the voters, as it perhaps should have all those years ago when Congress passed the Raker Act.

Though at least one previous study concludes that there is much more to study on the feasibility of restoration, the San Francisco Public Utilities Commission maintains that the issue has been investigated

enough and findings show that restoration would lead to increases in water and power costs for the City, as well as a loss of hydropower (a "clean" source of energy if you don't count the associated habitat destruction). Several of their arguments are good ones, but they underline the fact that those interested in keeping the dam are those whose pocketbooks would be directly impacted. And in an issue of national regard, this still ignores the interests of the rest of the nation.

John Muir would be pleased, having bluntly written in *The Yosemite*, "These temple destroyers, devotees of ravaging commercialism, seem to have a perfect contempt for Nature, and, instead of lifting their eyes to the God of the mountains, lift them to the Almighty Dollar."

Proponents of dam removal do not insist the restoration would be cheap; they hold that San Francisco should never have been given the right in the first place to drown Yosemite Valley's cousin. As Null points out, the decisions made a century ago "might not be the same decisions we would make today," and that "if you don't need a dam, you shouldn't have a dam." Restoration would restore ecological connectivity, diffuse tourism in one of the most visited national parks in the nation, and undo damage that should never have been done.

Joy Zedler, professor of botany at the University of Wisconsin, Madison, whose students drafted a plan for adaptive restoration of Hetch Hetchy, agrees that the reservoir should never have been put there in the first place. "This is not a national reservoir," she says, "that place is partly mine!"

Muir's March

Eight-year-olds may not have the vocabulary or dexterity of language to express the layers of inequity in a complex political debate, but the schoolyard has taught them right from wrong, and fair from unfair. It is in these simple dichotomies that they interpret our complicated world—a lesson that many big kids could stand to revisit.

This August, Restore Hetch Hetchy ran its annual Muir's March, a fundraiser where people raise money for the nonprofit and get to go on a backpacking trip, this year guided by California Alpine Guides. Each trip ended on the same day, at the same time, at O'Shaughnessy Dam (which was generously patrolled by armed agents camouflaged in the trees, clearly indicating dissidence as a threat to national security). For this event, I wore my mountain guide hat, and carried a (waterproof) notebook.

Surprisingly, not everyone on the trip was a proponent of restoration. Scott, the father of twin eight year olds, is undecided on the issue, and came along simply for the chance to go backpacking with his kids, and to promote community awareness of such a complex issue.

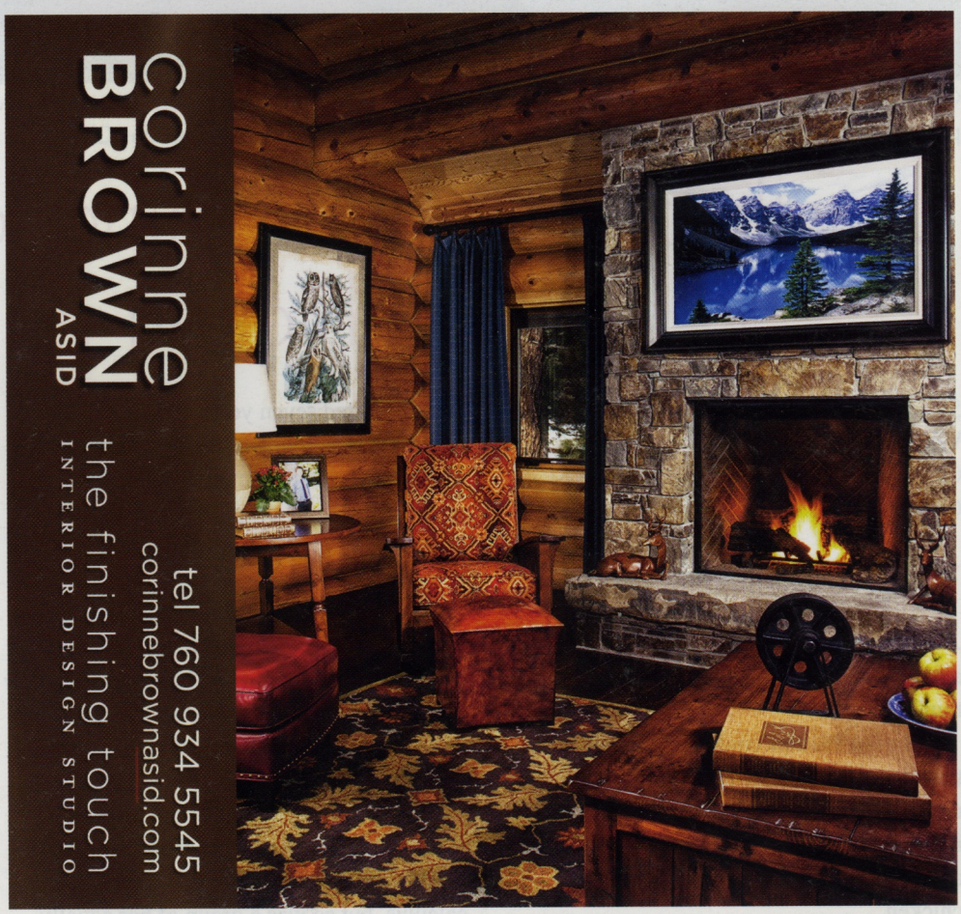
Drew, however, who brought his eight-year-old daughter, is a member of Restore Hetch Hetchy's Board of Directors, and owns a restoration consulting firm called Restoration Design Group. They specialize in the planning, design, and engineering of stream and wetland restoration projects. He favors restoration, and can cite many studies and explain the whole issue eloquently. He loves, however, to listen to the kids talk about the issue: for them, it is an issue of fairness. Of San Francisco taking something that wasn't wholly theirs for the taking.

As the eight year olds collaborated to dig a ditch in the dirt, which evolved from parent-trap to miniature Olympic gymnastic stadium, Drew turned to me and said with much thought, "We sometimes have to take a step back to move forward, and restoring Hetch Hetchy is an instrumental part in bringing San Francisco's water system into the 21st century."

The value of the lessons learned while caked in dirt, fully immersed in the wonders, big and small, of our natural environment, is hard to quantify. But to deprive future generations of the chance to see such sights is like gambling on our own spiritual health, our own sustainability.

As the debate dragged on and John Muir saw his own voice drowning in the murky waters of moneyed interests and misinformation, he wrote to one of his daughters, "I'll be relieved when it's settled, for it's killing me."

His hope and optimism dashed, Muir left this world, defeated. Perhaps his words simply came a century too early.



Closing a Chapter in the City's Sinful Water History

7-20-1998

■ Owens Valley: It takes a lot more than a movie to get some historical perspective on the city's appetite for water.

L.A. Times

By ABRAHAM HOFFMAN

Want to be an expert on the Owens Valley-Los Angeles water controversy, the one that was in the news this week when a deal was struck to abate valley dust storms that resulted from the city's water policies? It's simple. Just rent the 1974 film "Chinatown" and take some notes.

Or at least that's what more than a few people have told me when they learned I had written a book about the controversy. "Oh, yeah. 'Chinatown.' "

But water history doesn't get written in Hollywood. For that, it's better to rely on a number of well-researched books that have been published on the city's most notorious water controversy. These books provide some perspective not just on L.A.'s water wars but on the entire question of balancing urban needs with environmental concerns.

'We could ease the pressure on our resources by requiring everyone to count off by twos and march off the unlucky ones into the Pacific, as one environmentalist has all but suggested. But this is hardly a realistic solution.'

The Owens Valley dispute began in 1905 when agents acting for Los Angeles bought up Owens River water options under questionable circumstances. After the completion of the aqueduct in 1913, matters settled down for a decade, only to flare up again in the water wars of the 1920s. Los Angeles ultimately bought out hundreds of farmers and businessmen and obtained complete control of the valley's river system.

The city's actions brought severe criticism from the state Legislature in the 1930s. Meanwhile, Los Angeles grew far beyond the expectations of even the most optimistic boosters. From 200,000 people in 1905, the city topped a million in 1930, and more than 3 million in the 1990s. I wish that today's city residents had a thirst for history to match that thirst for water.

In 1905, the city's population was overwhelmingly white Anglo Saxon Protestant. The success of Los Angeles as the economic center of Southern California invited the arrival of a population during the century that is culturally, religiously and otherwise diverse, and to a great extent unaware of how Los Angeles got this way.

Ask any of the recent arrivals (recent meaning, say, 30 years or so) where the water they use for drinking, bathing, washing and sprinkling their lawns comes from. The answer usually is the water faucet. Yes, but before it gets to the faucet, where did it come from? Blank stares, then the guesses: the Los Angeles River, those mountains over there or maybe somehow from the ocean.

Identify Mulholland, Sherman, Chandler, Huntington, Hellman. Yes, they're the names of streets, but they're also the names of people connected with the phenomenal growth of Los Angeles. Were the city boosters evil men? Robert Towne, who wrote the screenplay for "Chinatown," mutters on TV about how the names on the public monuments belong to people who should have been put in prison, but this is nonsense. Their actions benefited themselves and their city, and for decades Los Angeles' view of its water rights and its economic and political influence was perceived as the correct recipe for municipal greatness.

We could ease the pressure on our resources by requiring everyone to count off by twos and march off the unlucky ones into the Pacific, as one environmentalist has all but suggested. But this is hardly a realistic solution. Inevitably, as our population increases, the drain on resources will continue despite our most conscientious efforts.

Times have changed since 1970, the year that Los Angeles completed a second aqueduct and continued its policy of diverting the streams that fed into Mono Lake. A general environmental consciousness now exists to some degree among the city's residents, even if the city's history remains vague. We know that, after years of litigation, the Mono Lake Committee won a major victory over the city, saving the lake.

Periodically, politicians from the city and Owens Valley announce settlements on such issues as ground water drainage and property rights. The city seems to have reached the point now where it can deal honorably with the dust storm problem. Elected officials and Los Angeles Department of Water and Power commissioners represent a generation more sensitive to environmental concerns, a generation far different from the one that at the beginning of this century advocated that the greatest good should go to the greatest number.

Abraham Hoffman is the author of "Vision or Villainy: Origins of the Owens Valley-Los Angeles Water Controversy" (Texas A&M University Press, 1981), which was awarded a Donald H. Pflueger Local History Prize by the Historical Society of Southern California in 1993.

How Mono boomed during the Great Depression

10-5-2019

By David Carle

Late in 1929, the United States and the world plunged into the decade-long "Great Depression." Yet, as that economic crisis took hold, voters in Los Angeles approved a $38.8 million bond in 1930, to finish buying Owens Valley land and to extend the Los Angeles Aqueduct to the Mono Lake basin. The *Los Angeles Times*, on March 16, 1930, declared:

"CITY MUST VOTE BONDS OR THROTTLE EXPANSION: To safeguard the city's present water supply, unchallenged control requires the ownership of all lands and water rights of every nature within the confines of the Owens Valley. A water shortage in 1932 or 1933 is certain in Los Angeles, unless additional water can be brought in from Mono Basin."

During the next decade, nearly all farming ended in the Owens Valley, businesses closed, and families left as Los Angeles completed land purchases to the north end of the valley.

Meanwhile, up in the Mono Lake Basin, several public works projects delivered an economic boom that temporarily shielded the local economy from hardships afflicting the nation. The 1930 national census had counted just 1,360 residents in Mono County, with 342 in the

10-5-2019

The Inyo Register

EASTERN SIERRA HISTORY

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 5, 2019

As many as 1,500 Los Angeles employees were on hand in 1935, the first year of construction on the city's aqueduct extension,

Photos courtesy Eastern Sierra Interpretive Association

Mono Basin, including the new town of Leevining. By 1940, the county population grew by 69 percent, to 2,299, most of that accounted for within the Mono Lake area, which jumped 240 percent to 841 residents. But census counts taken 10 years apart missed the spike that peaked between 1935 and 1939.

As many as 1,500 Los Angeles employees were on hand in 1935, the first year of construction on the city's aqueduct extension. Carpenters, plumbers, electricians and painters established four construction camps before winter arrived. Work began on an 11-mile tunnel beneath the Mono Craters. An underground labor force and its support crew totaled 800 to 900 through the following five years. Most single men were housed in dormitories at West Portal, East Portal, and Shafts 1 and 2 along the tunnel route. Equipment and construction buildings were supplemented by mess halls, recreation halls and a hospital, commissary and elementary school. Many of the men were married, with wives and children. Every cabin and shack in Leevining and June Lake was rented, and shanty "towns" appeared. When local stores began charging the out-of-towners higher than usual prices, the city issued tokens for use in their own commissaries. The brass coins soon were being honored at stores in Leevining and June Lake, too.

At first, workers from the city were only hired for 90 days, to maximize the number of unemployed given jobs. But work supervisors preferred to keep trained employees. Safety concerns prevailed, yet the policy explanation is a sobering picture of conditions at the time:

"Thousands of our citizens ... are facing abject poverty due to lack of employment. Their homes are being taken from them, their children are going undernourished, and misery is pursuing the lives of these helpless families. ... it is obviously unjust to ... offer no aid whatsoever to (those) who perhaps at this moment face starvation." Los Angeles Board of Water and Power Commissioners, December 14, 1934. (emphasis added)

The massive Los Angeles Aqueduct tunnel project was not the only work fueling the local economic "boom." One Roosevelt New Deal program was the Citizens Conservation Corps (CCC), which sent hundreds of young men to the Eastern Sierra. Large camps were manned in Rock Creek, Mammoth Lakes, and Antelope Valley (Coleville), with smaller "spike" camps near Gull Lake, Bridgeport and elsewhere as needed. By 1940, the *Bridgeport-Chronicle Union* newspaper reported "350 Men at Work on Projects in Mono Forest."

The CCC constructed ranger stations, hiking trails and campgrounds, but also built community water systems. Two wildfires in the Mono Basin in 1940, were fought by 200 men from CCC camps at Fern Creek, Mammoth, Antelope, Mason Valley and Hawthorne.

Highway crews were also in the region, paving the Tioga Road between the Yosemite National Park entrance gate and Tuolumne Meadows. Gordon Oxley came to June Lake in 1937 to work at the Cherokee Lodge, but the road paving project "paid better," he recalled in his oral history. About 100 workers would go to Leevining on their days off, "and buy 10-Hi whiskey and play a lot of poker with sheepherders," Oxley said, at Bodie Mike's Café.

With aqueduct tunnel workers, the CCC, and highway crews, plus 72 miners at the Simpson gold mine on the mountain above Leevining, bars and music halls rollicked on Saturday nights. The town had five bars then and weekly dances held at "Hess Hall." The once quiet June Lake loop changed its character almost overnight. Without electrical service, generators ran to serve saloons like the Tiger Bar. When not partying, baseball teams from the different projects competed with locals. Children joined scout troops and women formed social clubs. In the final winters of that boisterous decade, ski clubs installed tow ropes on every suitable hill, including Conway Summit and McGee Creek, and moonlight ice skating parties were held on June Lake, flood lights furnished from West Portal.

The tunnel and diversion facilities were completed in 1940. Men were laid off as work ended. It was not until June 1, 1940, that a water diversion permit was actually granted to Los Angeles by the state Water Board. The board's staff wrote, "It is indeed unfortunate that the City's proposed development will result in decreasing the aesthetic advantages of the Mono Basin, but there is apparently nothing that this office can do to prevent it."

Booms do not last forever. Mono County was settling down, again, when Crowley Reservoir was dedicated on October 19, 1941. Mono County supervisor Venita McPherson spoke to the crowd of 675 people gathered that day: "I know that if [Father Crowley] were here today ...his prayer along with ours would be that this great metropolis would leave untouched the natural resources of this wonderful country to be enjoyed by you, with us, until the time comes that you actually need it."

Impacts on Mono Lake, as it declined after 1941's stream diversions, would become apparent through the next four decades. The city of Los Angeles's water licenses would finally be amended in 1994 to comply with court orders to protect the lake and its tributaries (thanks to the Mono Lake Committee and National Audubon Society).

To learn more about this historical event as well as many other fascinating historical events in the Eastern Sierra, join the Eastern Sierra Interpretive Association (ESIA) for the 4th Annual Eastern Sierra History Conference. The Conference will be held October 25-27, 2019, Sierra Nevada Aquatic Research Laboratory's Page Center, Mammoth Lakes, CA. For more information at to www.esiaonline.org.

The True History of the Owens Valley

6-8-1993

How L.A. acquired the rights to a desert blessed with water

By Elliot Diringer
Chronicle Staff Writer

In the telling and the retelling — the 1974 film "Chinatown" is perhaps the best-known rendering, if not the most faithful — the story of Owens Valley has taken on mythic proportions.

The conventional lore is that Los Angeles stole the water and destroyed the valley. The truth is not quite so clearcut.

From the neutral perspective of natural history, the Owens Valley was and remains a desert, a narrow plateau perched at 4,000 feet between two towering mountain ranges, the Sierra Nevada and the Inyo-Whites.

But it is a desert blessed with water. Sierra snowmelt produces abundant runoff, which swelled the Owens River each spring for countless centuries, making its banks a ribbon of green the length of the valley. The river fed Owens Lake, where the pooled water drew great flocks of birds.

The water also drew settlers, who by the 1870s had killed or chased off most of the local Paiutes and had begun digging the earthen canals that ultimately would nurture 75,000 acres of orchards and irrigated fields.

By the turn of the century, the valley's water was also attracting the interest of Los Angeles, an aspiring metropolis whose population boom was just beginning and which was already outgrowing its local water supply.

Piecemeal Acquisition

In 1904, an ex-mayor named Fred Eaton arrived in the valley with a scheme to capture its water legally but surreptitiously.

Bankrolled by some of Los Angeles' leading citizens, and presenting himself variously as a would-be cattle rancher and as an agent of the federal government, Eaton made generous offers on key parcels of land. Soon he had acquired rights to so much water that city voters were persuaded to float bonds for an aqueduct to haul it south.

Construction of the 233-mile aqueduct across the unforgiving Mojave Desert was overseen by William Mulholland, the legendary city water chief who, even more than Eaton, is cast as the villain in the drama of Owens Valley. At a gala celebrating the canal's completion in 1913, Mulholland turned to his bosses and declared, "There it is. Take it."

Los Angeles promised at first to import only water that was "surplus" to the needs of the valley's remaining farmers. But the city's population kept soaring, and when drought struck just a few years later, agents for Los Angeles headed back to the valley. Thus opened the ugliest chapter in the Owens Valley war.

The valley's irrigation system was essentially a string of private cooperatives. Farmers, organized as ditch companies, collectively maintained the canals that delivered their water. The city's strategy was to buy out a sufficient number of farmers in each ditch company so that the others, unable to maintain the canals on their own, would have no choice but to sell.

Aqueduct Dynamited

Neighbor turned against neighbor, and the conflict turned violent. Saboteurs began dynamiting the aqueduct, and the city brought in guards toting carbines and machine guns. The resistance was broken not by armed force, however, but by the sudden collapse of the Inyo County Bank, which went down with many of the farmers' life savings.

Merchants whose businesses evaporated with the water demanded compensation, so the city bought them out, too. By the mid-1930s, Los Angeles owned nearly all the valley floor.

The conflict flared again in 1970, when the city, having constructed a second aqueduct to Los Angeles, dramatically increased its pumping of groundwater from the valley. Inyo County filed suit, and after more than a decade of court battles, the city and county decided to negotiate.

In 1991, they signed an agreement limiting the city's water exports, to protect the valley's sparse vegetation. But other parties, including the state Department of Fish and Game, want a stronger commitment from Los Angeles, and the court fight continues.

Officials of the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power, although reluctant to defend the practices of their predecessors, make no apologies for their presence in Owens Valley.

"I'm sure things were done in 1910 that couldn't or shouldn't be done today," said Chris Plakos, a department spokesman. "But this was the best use of the water. It was the greatest good for the greatest number."

OVER

The Struggle That Shaped California

From Page 1

and the water that flows above and below it — is controlled from the offices of the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power, 250 miles away.

"It's virtually impossible for anyone to do anything in Owens Valley that involves business or ranching or public projects, without at some point having to get permission from the city of Los Angeles," said James. "There's no private property, and there's no water."

Crumbing silos are all that remain of the old homesteads. Long gone are the shady orchards where crews of strapping young men harvested wagonloads of fruit late into the summer evenings.

And while the economy has healed over time, the valley floor bears lasting scars: a long reach of river where water no longer runs; a lifeless moonscape where once there was a lake; parched patches of earth where even native desert plants cannot survive.

Al Giraud was born in 1924, at the height of the Owens Valley war, when desperate farmers were dynamiting the aqueduct spiriting their water to Los Angeles and armed guards were brought in to stop them.

"I've seen it like it was — fruit orchards and vineyards, pheasants and quail," said the retired sheep rancher. "There's nothing here anymore. There's nothing but desolation in this valley."

PHOTOS BY DEANNE FITZMAURICE/THE CHRONICLE

Ken Steward, the lone Owens Valley farmer who did not sell out to Los Angeles, strode past his collection of antique farm implements.

Steward, 79, agonized over what lies in store for his land

For many years, the bitterness sowed by Los Angeles' legendary water coup was so great that other cities knew better than to knock on a farmer's door and ask if there was water for sale.

But with California's population projected to double in 50 years and few new supplies in sight, urban water providers say they have no choice. To keep faucets running and factories humming, they are turning to "water marketing" — trading water for cash.

Pro-marketing forces are trying hard to convince leery growers and other rural residents that history will not repeat itself.

"Owens Valley is . . . a red herring," said Henry Vaux, director of the University of California's Water Resources Center. "There was some chicanery involved there. People were not clear about what quantities of water were getting moved. That would never happen today."

But on the other side of the Sierra Nevada, in the great Central Valley, where most of the state's farmers and most of its water are found, such reassurances ring hollow.

For every grower who might want to sell, there are many others like Sandy Denny, a third-generation farmer in the Glenn County rice belt, who are instinctively wary of city slickers who show up in town with checkbooks in hand.

"Water is the blood of the land," said Denny. "How do you feel about marketing blood? Should it go to the highest bidder? If it's in my veins already, do I let you just come and pull it out because you're willing to give me a lot of money? That is exactly what happened in the Owens Valley, and there has been no change that would prevent it from happening again."

The kind of ugly suspicions that once tore the Owens Valley apart are now surfacing in the Central Valley, where speculators are rumored to be roaming the countryside hoping to corner supplies that they can resell to cities for a hefty profit.

Farmers who are in fact looking to sell keep it quiet lest they be accused by their neighbors of selling out. The first thing they demand from a prospective buyer is a promise of confidentiality until a deal is made final.

"The idea of them selling their water — that's about the worst thing you can do," said Rich Tompkins of Redding, who is brokering a deal for a group of growers who would not be named. "It all goes back to the Owens Valley syndrome."

Owens Valley may be the most notorious, but it is not the only place in the West where an agricultural economy collapsed after the water it was built on was sold so that an urban area could flourish.

In Colorado, for instance, one of the states with a tradition of water marketing, fast-growing Denver suburbs offered to bail out struggling sugar beet growers in the Arkansas Valley by buying their water. They left behind empty storefronts and weed-choked fields.

"The towns really just have withered," said University of Colorado law professor Larry MacDonnell, who is studying the Arkansas Valley sales. "It's kind of a revisitation of (Owens Valley) but at a more modest pace and in a more open manner. None of it was done secretly."

These days in the Owens Valley, the fight is no longer about preserving farms, but preserving the environment.

For more than two decades, ever since Los Angeles opened a second aqueduct and began sucking more water from beneath the valley floor, Inyo County has been demanding pumping limits to keep the valley's sparse vegetation from drying up altogether. In 1991, the city and county thought they had struck a deal.

But the state Department of Fish and Game is holding out for more. With support from local environmentalists, the department is insisting that Los Angeles restore more water to the lower Owens River, which was left lifeless when the city first began its exports 80 years ago.

Once running the length of the valley, the river now ends abruptly at an unassuming concrete dam. The swollen Los Angeles Aqueduct veers off in one direction, beginning its 233-mile journey south. Below the dam, the dry river bed is choked with tules, cattails, willows and cottonwoods.

"The city puts a little water back in the river 10 miles downstream," said Fish and Game biologist Alan Pickard, "but this is pretty much what it looks like for another 50 miles. This is not a river."

"The city wanted to buy us out. I told them I wasn't interested. I've got two sons, and I want to save a little land and maybe a little water for them."

— KEN STEWARD, Farmer

When the lower river flowed, it emptied into Owens Lake, which teemed with waterfowl. Now there are just a few patches of wetlands on the edge of a vast salt flat, which on a windy day sends a veil of stinging dust sweeping across the valley floor. The barren lakebed is the worst known source of lung-damaging dust pollution in the United States.

Despite the toll it has taken, there are many in Owens Valley who see a silver lining in Los Angeles' omnipresence. Without water, the valley has been spared the relentless growth consuming the rest of California. It is the kind of rural haven that is getting harder and harder to find.

"In the long run, the water grab was probably the best thing that could have happened to the Owens Valley," said Phil Pister, a former state Department of Fish and Game biologist. "It's not a big bunch of subdivisions. It's actually a Shangri-La."

Those old enough to remember the farming days, of course, would rather the water were still there.

There is still some ranching in the valley, nearly all of it on land leased from the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power. And there is one farmer, perhaps the last one, still working his own land.

Fourteen miles south of Bishop, on the valley's eastern flank, Ken Steward's alfalfa fields are an island of green amid the desert scrub. Steward bought the 160-acre spread in 1948, and like his father before him, feels squeezed to sell to Los Angeles.

Steward's father ultimately felt he had no choice. After most of his neighbors sold, the elder Steward struggled to keep up the eight-mile canal feeding his farm but grew tired of wading into freezing water to clear the debris. In 1926, he sold the city of Los Angeles the land that his own father had homesteaded 60 years before.

His son faces a different problem. He draws water from the ground, not from a canal, but after the city dramatically boosted its groundwater pumping, one of his wells dried up and the other dropped 30 feet. The city is compensating him for lost production and has promised to drill a new well. Steward is still waiting.

"The city wanted to buy us out. I told them I wasn't interested," he said. "I've got two sons, and I want to save a little land and maybe a little water for them."

But his sons have jobs of their own, and at 79, Steward is weary of rising early each day to tend his fields and his cows. He is beginning to wonder if maybe he should sell.

To whom?

"Anybody but the Department of Water and Power."

WATER: FROM OWENS VALLEY TO L.A.

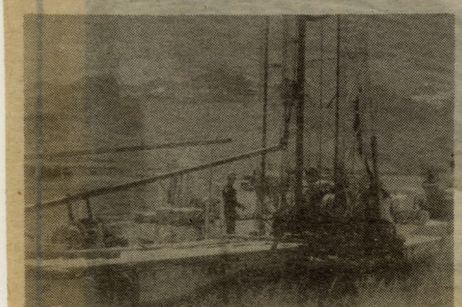
CHRONICLE GRAPHIC

Water News Updates

Sept. 1995

Stewards, LA sign settlement; new well drilled on the ranch

Ken and Elaine Steward and the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power have signed an agreement that settles a long-standing dispute. The Stewards claimed that the City's groundwater pumping lowered the water table beneath their 160-acre cattle and alfalfa ranch, affecting wells and resulting in a loss of alfalfa production.



Howard Pump drilling new well Photo: Heidi Walters

LADWP denies responsibility for any losses the Stewards may have suffered. Nevertheless, LADWP has agreed to, among other things, fund the drilling of a new, deeper well on the ranch, buy and install a pump, motor, new electrical service and a flow meter for the well, connect the well by pipe to the nearby existing ranch reservoir and provide an outlet for irrigation.

The cost of the new well is estimated at $85,000. In addition, LADWP will adjust the power bills for the new well and an existing well to account for changes in depth-to-water levels in the wells.

Also, LADWP will compensate the Stewards for losses claimed as a result of the increased depth to groundwater for the 1993-1997 growing seasons.

Water in the Owens Valley

The first irrigation in Owens Valley was done from the more accessible tributaries of the River in and around Lone Pine, George's Creek (Manzanar), Independence, Aberdeen, Fish Springs, Big Pine, Bishop and Round Valley. While the waters of the River itself flowed on south to Owens Lake, an alkali lake some 20 miles long and eight or ten miles wide.

As the valley settled up, the waters of the river itself were diverted from the river by means of big ditches or canals.

From the south the ditches were as follows: the Stevens Ditch, the East Side Canal, the latter intended to irrigate the land east of the river and south of Independence, and being the only ditch diverted by a company of outside people. The next north was the Sanger Ditch, to irrigate lands east of the river and south and east of Big Pine. A Mr. Sanger built this ditch to irrigate land owned by him. He raised alfalfa and horses. The next north was the Owens River and Big Pine Canal. It was built by a group of Big Pine farmers to irrigate land west of the river and in the vicinity of Big Pine. Its point of diversions was just north of the Collins Road. A ditch not too far north of the Big Pine Ditch was built by a man by the name of Muller, but it soon went out of business. And then there was the Dell Ditch, the Rawson Ditch, built by a group of farmers on the west side of the river; while on the east side of the river were the A.O. Collins Ditch and the George Collins Ditch, both built by the men whose names they bore. Further north were the two ditches that were first in time and the first in use, the McNally Ditch and the Bishop Creek Ditch, the name Bishop Creek had nothing to do with the fact that this Ditch caught the surplus water of Bishop Creek, but was so named because at that time – sometime in the late 1870s – Bishop itself was known as Bishop Creek. Both ditches were built by groups of farmers, and last in time but the highest in point of diversion was the Owens River Canal, to irrigate land south and west of Bishop. It was built by a group of farmers.

A diversion highest on a stream has great advantages – if there is water in a stream, the highest diversion can take it. This is not a legal point, but a fact that only a lawsuit or a shotgun can stop.

The Stevens Ditch and the East Side Canal were doomed from the start. With all the diversions above them, they got less and less water, and when the City of Los Angeles came along, they were only too glad to sell out at a good price for that time.

There was no storage on the River any place, and the winter runoff continued to pour into a shrinking Owens Lake. The Reclamation Service about this time began looking into the water situation, and somewhere around 1905 began the surveys and other work necessary to store and use the water of Owens River in a less wasteful way. This work was under the somewhat supervision of J.B. Lipincott, who it eventually came out was also in the pay of the City of Los Angeles.

In the meantime, the ditches from Big Pine north got together and formed an organization known as the Associated Ditches. They sent three men to Washington to help the Reclamation project along and were told by President Theodore Roosevelt, "The greatest good to the greatest number" was the guideline.

Meanwhile, the dry years continued, and it became evident that the City of Los Angeles would need more water. Representative of the Associated Ditches met with representatives of the City and a plan was developed – the only plan that would have preserved Owens Valley as it then was. The plan was to build a 100-foot dam (where

they now have one) and would guarantee water to irrigate thirty thousand (30,000) acres, more acres than were then being irrigated.

But there was one thing wrong with the plan: A dam only 100 feet high would not flood the land of Fred Eaton in Long Valley, so the local powers – the Inyo County Bank and Fred Eaton – turned it down and insisted on a 150-foot dam, regardless of the fact that engineering studies found that the formation at the dam site would not support a dam that high.

About this time, the same powers that turned down the 100-foot dam dreamed that an Irrigation District would stop the City – for the dry years continued, and the City had to have more water. Fred Eaton was heard to remark, "We've got them over a barrel." If the City's point of diversion had been above the proposed Irrigation District, it might have worked, but as it was, the point of diversion was below the proposed Irrigation District, and all the City had to do was buy the land and not irrigate it, and the water would flow back into the river, and the City would pick it up.

At the first public meeting, in the Sunland School House, it was proposed to include West Bishop and all the land irrigated from the river, and to leave the town of Bishop out. But when the matter came to a vote, West Bishop was left out, and the town of Bishop was included.

And this is what wrecked Owens Valley! The town of Bishop with no water to give to the Irrigation District, but with votes enough to control all matters relating to water.

And of course an Irrigation District had to have an Engineer and an Attorney and an Assessor and whatnot, all costing money, so next thing in order was a bond issue. It was not known at the time that the Inyo County Bank was in trouble and would not be known definitely until 1927, when the Bank went broke. So a bond election was held, and with the votes of Bishop with nothing to lose, it carried, $420,000, and that money, no one ever knew what happened to it. When the Bank failed, Watterson's were not asked about it.

For the Bank President was president of the Irrigation District.

A group of farmers went to Sacramento to try to stop the sale of the bonds, and while the farmers were there, Attorney General gave them to understand that they would not be sold. But after the Farmers left, he had a meeting with the President of the bank, W. W. Watterson, and changed his mind.

So there we were going in debt to buy something that already belonged to us and turn the management over to the Inyo County Bank and town of Bishop.

The dry years continued; 30,000 inches of water were claimed by the ditches, while only 4,000 inches of water were in the river. The Owens River Canal people, being the highest on the river and being perfectly willing to defend their position, had armed men at their intake to see that nobody got any of the supply that they intended to take. Had the City not continued buying land, in spite of the Irrigation District, there would surely have been disastrous trouble between the farmers themselves.

Being denied the means of keeping the valley as it was, and running short of water, the City had to buy, and buy they did. The McNally Ditch area was the first to sell; good prices were paid, and nobody was compelled to sell, and if he didn't sell, he got water; nobody was frozen out.

The president of the Inyo County Bank was making efforts to sell the whole valley, the Bank to handle the details, but some local people had lost confidence, and preferred to handle their own affairs.

The Big Pine people were the next to sell at very good prices; nobody had to sell. They wanted to sell, and if a man would not sell, he got water anyway; nobody was forced out.

And so it went. A group under the Bishop creek Ditch was the next. I was one of them, one of the negotiators for the sale in fact, so I know the City paid good prices. I know of one man who had tried to sell his place the year before for $14,000, who got $27,000 when he sold to the City. Numerous people thanked us for the price we got for them.

One man, Orrie Dunn, who had sold to the City did not get his check when he thought he would, and made inquiries and found out his check had been sent to the Inyo County Bank. The bank officials had forged his name and cashed the check. I heard of another whose name had been forged and asked him about it and his reply was, "Yes, they forged my name and my wife's too."

So what wrecked the valley was not the City of Los Angeles, but the Irrigation District backed by power-hungry and financially pressed local people.

With the other ditches sold to the City, the Owens River Canal people who wanted to sell too and became worried. If they had not wanted to sell, there was no reason why they should sell; they were the highest on the river and could take all the water they wanted, but they knew that regardless of what they took, the City could still get water, and they could keep on irrigating their farms. But they wanted to sell and to show the City that they had better buy, the radicals among them decided to seize the spillway on the aqueduct north of Lone Pine. The town of Bishop, too, was worried, for if the whole country dried up, what would happened to Bishop?

In the meantime, the above radicals had resorted to dynamite, intimidation and violence to gain their ends. L.C. Hall, who was instrumental in selling the McNally Ditch, was pulled off of a stool where he was eating lunch, taken to Rossi Hill and threatened; he was a Mason and giving the Masonic sign of distress. Some Mason in the mob intervened, and he was taken to George Warren's place north of Big Pine and turned over to him.

Warren was a director of the Irrigation District, but had been instrumental in helping sell the Big Pine Ditch. He was threatened to such an extent that he kept a six-shooter buckled on him wherever he went and had farmer friends guarding his place.

George Watterson was ordered out of town, but it so happened he was getting ready to leave when it happened, so that worked no hardship on him. Will Symons, who sold at the time of the McNally Ditch, and one who had helped negotiate the settlement with the City that would have kept the valley as it had been, felt himself in such jeopardy that he never came to town without a loaded shotgun on the seat beside him.

The Irrigation District brought in an attorney by he name of Boone, if I remember correctly, a good man too. One day he stopped me on the street, took me into the entrance of the stairs in a building. He saw how things were going here, and he told me, "You and Gus Cashbaugh and Tom Williams be careful of what you say, for they have spotters out to get something on you."

Before that on one of our trips in negotiating the sale to the City, the radicals held a meeting and were planning on meeting us on the road and telling us not to come back. Watterson, the president of the bank, put a stop to that.

Dynamite was used not only on wells, but some was set off on nothing near where I lived at that time; set off to scare me I suppose. I carried a pistol in my "pistol pocket" all the time and slept with a loaded shotgun by my bedside. Joe Garner, as fine a man as ever walked, slept in an empty silo with a shotgun by his side.

We were watched and spied on all the time. Those were hectic days, and poor Joe couldn't stand it and finally committed suicide, the victim of those farmers who now are credited with fighting the City's purchases when, as a matter of fact, they were doing all they could to force the City to buy.

When it came to the final purchase of the Owens River Canal lands, the City and the radicals agreed to an appraisal committee, composed of George Taylor, Chairman of the Inyo County Supervisors; Viv Jane, County assessor; and Grant Clark, County Treasurer and a man of Countywide experience.

These men appraised every parcel that was sold, and the only criticism I ever heard was when some farmer said, "My neighbor got more than I did. Not one of them ever felt he got less than his property was worth, and in fact nobody had to sell anyway, and if he hadn't sold would have got water for his land.

Those were fearful days, and the truth has never been told. The town of Bishop was worried, and justly so, and that was where the newspapers were located, and the news they put out was most awfully biased. George Watterson and Will Symons were two of the men who negotiated the settlement that might have kept our valley as it was, and instead of being honored for what they had done, not only then but always, both men were branded as traitors by the local press.

The trouble with the City does not compare to the trouble among the local people. Most of the farmers were head over heels in debt to the Inyo County bank and did not dare to oppose anything the Bank wanted. The Bank itself, through injudicious investments and otherwise, was in straitened circumstances.

I found this out to my own satisfaction when I received the last payment of $13,500 on the land I had sold to the City. I received the check and deposited it in the bank on July 27, 1927, and the Bank blew up on the fourth of August.

I asked the receiver that was sent in here to take over how much the Bank was in the hole, and he replied, "Somewhere between three and a half and five million dollars."

The Watterson Brothers had their hand in everything; The Natural Soda Products Company never did pay, but they were paying dividends on that stock out of Bank Funds. Watterson Brothers incorporated had large holdings under the Bishop Creek Ditch that sold for $300,000. The stockholder never got a cent. Jean Blanc received dividends from stock he was supposed to own in the Bank, but when the Bank failed, his stock had been disposed of, even though he was still getting dividends.

C. A. Quarty

Harpers 1981, March

WATER AND POWER

The Owens Valley water war

by Page Stegner

The master condition, not only of any future developments in the West but of the maintenance and safeguarding of what exists there now, is the development and conservation of water production. Water, which is rigidly limited by the geography and climate, is incomparably more important than all other natural resources in the West put together.

—Bernard DeVoto

WHEN I CAME OUT of Mair's Market in Independence last spring, cradling a few supplies and a new frying pan to replace the one I backed the truck over at Whitney Portal, a blanket of high cirrus clouds had drifted over the crest of the Sierra Nevada and taken what little warmth the March sun could still muster. The peaks along the boundary of Kings Canyon and Sequoia National Parks and Inyo National Forest had vanished into ominous darkness below the higher scud, and there was the smell of snow in the wind blowing down from Kearsarge Pass. Until then the day had been deceptively seasonal; cool, the air so bright that the abrupt wall of the mountains rising ten thousand feet out of the shadscale and sagebrush of the Great Basin, snow-covered and etched against a ceramic sky of cobalt blue, seemed more like a Bierstadt hallucination than real granite, faulted and warped, shaped by wind and water and ice. I shivered in my cotton shirt and dug in the camper shell for my sheepskin.

An Inyo County sheriff's department van pulled in next to me, and I submitted to a long, expressionless stare from its occupants as I backed out of the parking lot and proceeded at a snail's pace up the road. Maybe they thought I was the mad bomber. Yesterday in Lone Pine all the talk was about the Molotov cocktail somebody had hurled into the Independence office of the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power (DWP), and none of the good citizens I heard on the street expressed anything but deep regret that it hadn't burned the place to the ground. The authorities were edgy: it was not the first such incident. Hatred of the DWP has a seventy-year history in the Owens Valley, and recent events had apparently rekindled it with such fervor that department officials were moving around the county in unmarked cars. An otherwise uncommunicative Paiute boy I gave a ride to from the Death Valley cutoff into Lone Pine told me, with a shadow of a smile, that he'd bet more than his boots somebody would dynamite the L.A. aqueduct before summer.

A few miles north of Independence I began looking for a place to camp. The valley floor along the west side of the highway was harsh and broken by chunks of bedrock sticking up through the alluvium; the distance between me and the upthrust of the Sierra block was only a few miles. To the east a broader, more rolling plain of sagebrush flowed monotonously to the base of the White Mountains. Nearly as

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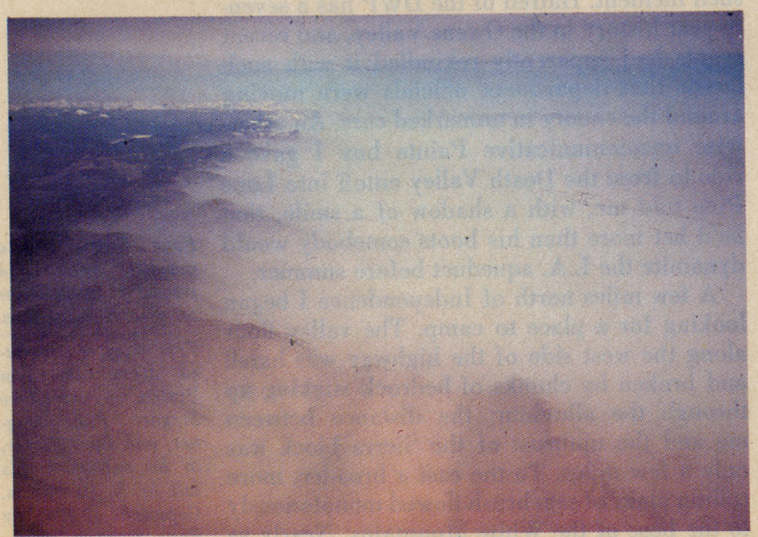
WATER AND POWER

high as the Sierra, they lay in its rain shadow and had never been subjected to glaciation. They looked rounder, softer, more benign.

Powdery snow began to dust the windshield, and I muttered about my incurable habit of driving long beyond the hour when visibility is still a factor in the selection of a camp. Along this stretch of Highway 395 there were hundreds of dirt roads ambling off through the brush, some ending at abandoned mines, some at campgrounds, some just petering out when they ran into the mountain wall. As usual, I made up my mind to quit at just that point when I could no longer make a roadside guess whether I'd find water and firewood, or carve up my tires in one of the many flows of basaltic lava, or wind up having to dig my way back to civilization out of axle-deep sand and soda ash.

Above: looking north into Owens Valley on a clear day. A portion of the dry lakebed is at the bottom of the photograph. The L.A. aqueduct is a thin ribbon to the left of the lakebed. The Sierra Nevada Mountains rise on the left. Below: dust blowing off the dry lakebed and valley floor.



MY FIRST MISTAKE aborted in the front yard of somebody's ramshackle ranch. My second led me east down a set of tire tracks toward the Owens River below the Tinemaha Reservoir and ended at a padlocked gate in the middle of a barbed wire fence. It was dark by now, with the snow falling in heavy, wet flakes, and I decided to forgo the amenities, heat a can of soup, and bed down in the camper shell. I had just reached for the ignition key when I heard a rifle shot. Leaving the lights on, I killed the engine and listened. Two more, three, four, five. Not small bore either. Then, as I sat there wondering who could be hunting elephants in the dark, hoping they wouldn't mistake my truck for an animate object, I got some arresting news. There was a man with a gun outside, and he was telling me to step out.

"What are you doing down here?"

"I was looking for a place to camp," I said.

"This look like a campground to you?"

"Well, no . . . ." I said. "It got dark and I couldn't see much. Listen, if I've trespassed on your property . . . ."

He cut my apology short. "You know Dave Walizer?"

"No."

"Jim Wickser?"

"No."

"Where are you from?"

"Santa Cruz."

"Where's that?"

"It's near San Francisco."

"Can you prove it?"

"Sure," I said, miffed, but too much the coward to ask who he thought *he* was. "I've got a driver's license and the truck registration if you want to see them."

He didn't. Satisfied that I didn't work for the DWP, he motioned me back into the cab. "You go on up to the highway and turn north about a half mile. You'll see a sign on your left that says Goodale Creek. There's a campground about two, three miles in."

"Thanks," I said. I turned the truck around and wound up the road, found the camp where he'd promised, and settled in for the night.

But two days later, in the *Inyo Register* news office, I overheard a couple of reporters talking about the DWP pump somebody had shot to pieces down along the aqueduct between Big Pine and Independence. The damage, one of them said, was increased by the use of armor-piercing shells. No wonder my man was a bit curt. Molotov cocktails? Armor-piercing shells? And windows smashed in DWP cars and trucks? Bags of concrete poured into water meters? The Owens Valley water war, cold since 1927, was obviously heating up again.

The Eaton–Mulholland scam

THE VALLEY LIES about 225 miles north of Los Angeles, between the jagged thrust of the Sierra's eastern wall and the more gently sculpted range of the Inyo–White Mountains along the California border. It is not big (roughly 100 miles long by 15 to 20 miles wide), and the subtleties of its high-desert ecology are overshadowed completely by the Sierran escarpment that seems to rise almost vertically from the brief foothills along its western side. Old-timers remember when nearly a quarter of its total acreage was under cultivation—apples, pears, alfalfa, corn, even watermelons, which the ranchers used to plant to feed their pigs—but that was before Fred Eaton and William Mulholland took a buckboard trip into the region in 1904 and devised a plan to acquire its entire water supply and ship it by aqueduct to the city of bad dreams.

Eaton and Mulholland were not the first to recognize the potential of the Owens Valley drainage basin. In 1903 the National Reclamation Service had mapped and surveyed the area with the intention of developing a model irrigation system that would double its productive land. The project engineer had reported to his chief of southwestern operations, J. B. Lippincott, that a simple dam at the northern end of the valley and canals running south along both sides would provide enough water to irrigate 100,000 acres of new land. Lippincott told his friend Fred Eaton (former superintendent of the Los Angeles Water Company and then mayor of the city) about the Reclamation Service study, and Eaton began to put together a complicated scheme to make himself outrageously rich. It was a long shot, but *if* he could acquire control over the water flow in the valley, and *if* he could get the federal irrigation project shifted to a municipal water diversion project, and *if* he could find a way to fund a multimillion-dollar aqueduct to transport that water to Los Angeles, he would own something of enormous value to a growing city that had almost no water resources of its own.

Eaton took a quiet trip to the headwaters of the Owens River and found that the surrounding land, about 12,000 acres, could be purchased for half a million dollars. The proposed dam site, for which the local ranchers had already signed over their water-storage rights to the Reclamation Service, was on the property, and it was clear that whoever owned the point of origin would have a virtual stranglehold on all downstream users. Part one of his plan was no problem. Neither was part two. Lippincott was happy to go along with it (he was later discovered to have been put on the city payroll while simultaneously working for the federal government), and reported to the Department of the Interior that the irrigation project no longer looked as attractive as it had at first. At the same time he made the Reclamation Service maps available to Eaton, who then felt secure enough to take an option on his headwater property.

But part three was not so easy. The cost of building a 225-mile aqueduct exceeded the resources of private capital, and in any event Mayor Eaton had won election in 1898 on a platform that called for municipal ownership of the water system—a platform that was implemented in 1902. Now he was scamming to sell the city of Los Angeles what presumably it would already own once the water had been stolen from the ranchers in the Owens Valley. The aqueduct would have to be built through the sale of public bonds, and the public might be less than thrilled by the prospect of Eaton's personal financial aggrandizement. It was a prickly dilemma, but there was no way around it. Eaton made an attempt to redefine the concept of municipal ownership to include only the *system* of transportation, not the *substance* transported, but that circumscription wouldn't wash with the one figure who was absolutely essential to his success, the Los Angeles superintendent of water, William Mulholland.

Mulholland took the term "municipalization" to mean what it said, and he was vigorously opposed to any scheme that might leave the city's water supply—existing or proposed—vulnerable to the capriciousness of private ownership. But his indignation was pragmatic rather than ethical. He was, after all, both Eaton's friend and protégé. There was no reason why an alternative might not be worked out that would satisfy everybody. He proposed

"It was a prickly dilemma, but there was no way around it."

an agreement whereby Los Angeles, for an amount equal roughly to the purchase price of the 12,000 acres in question, would buy out Eaton's water rights and an easement for a reservoir, and Eaton could keep the land. Moreover, the city would move immediately to acquire key downstream water rights from valley ranchers, who were all still under the illusion that they were dealing with the U.S. Reclamation Service and merely aiding the development of their own irrigation system. Country girls at the fair, they could be had before they knew it. When the city diverted everything below the headwater dam on Eaton's property, they would be forced out of business and Eaton could pick up their stock for a song. He wouldn't be a water mogul, perhaps, but he would certainly be a cattle baron.

IMPLEMENTATION of the Eaton–Mulholland plan would have been difficult, to say the least, without the host of self-interested boosters who began to swarm around it. The most significant of these were the members of a land syndicate who bought 16,000 acres of barren, waterless land in the San Fernando Valley (for $35 an acre), and whose names read like a register of the most influential and wealthy men in the state—Henry Huntington, E. H. Harriman, W. G. Kerchoff, Joseph Sartori, E. T. Earl, Harrison Gray Otis. Earl and Otis owned three of the four leading papers in Los Angeles. Initially they were able to maintain a voluntary silence about the city's designs on the Owens Valley (while Eaton, posing as a Reclamation Service agent, went about acquiring water rights for transfer), and later to put pressure on public opinion in favor of a bond issue to build the aqueduct.

The syndicate, of course, had plans to divert the diversion; water flowing to Los Angeles could be siphoned off to irrigate its San Fernando land, and it was in a position to exert tremendous influence not only over local and state agencies but over the federal government as well. And the final obstacle was indeed the federal government, because in order to begin construction of the aqueduct, a right of way across federal land had to be obtained from Congress. Sitting on the House Public Lands Committee was Sylvester Smith, the congressman from Inyo County, and by this time the cat was out of the bag. The ranchers and farmers knew that they had been duped, and they were furious.

The right-of-way bill was introduced by Frank Flint, the Republican senator from Los Angeles. Smith proposed an amendment that would reinstate the original Reclamation Service project and make water available to the city only when there was an excess and only for domestic use. It was an amendment supported by the secretary of the interior, and, in fact, by William Mulholland himself, but it posed an obvious threat to long-range development plans in Los Angeles, on the one hand, and disaster to Huntington, Harriman, Otis, et al., on the other. The smoke in the back rooms could have choked a horse. Oddly enough, when it cleared, Gifford Pinchot, the head of the Forest Service and grandfather of the conservation movement, and his boss Theodore Roosevelt, champion of the little man and president of the United States, had declared their opposition to the Smith amendment, and the Flint bill was voted intact out of committee. The House passed it the next day. The interest of the few, said Roosevelt, "must unfortunately be disregarded in view of the infinitely greater interest to be served by putting the water in Los Angeles." It was the final blow to the Owens Valley.

That was in 1906. The elevation of modern consciousness about the environment and the rights of the few to be protected from sacrifice to the needs (greeds) of the many would preclude a successful heist of what remains of the Owens Valley's lifeblood in the 1980s. Wouldn't it? Evidently not.

The needs of the few

IN A LONE PINE coffee shop, while I waited to pay my breakfast bill, I read a Xeroxed flyer, taped to the bakery case, urging everyone to join in the "meter strike," whatever that was, and announcing a gathering of the Concerned Citizens of Owens Valley to discuss a plan to combat the continued deceit, malfeasance, and general skulduggery of the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power. There was a phone number to call for further information, which I scratched down on a matchbook and later dialed from a booth at a gas station. Lois Wilson, local coordinator for the Concerned Citizens, invited me to stop by. She'd give me all the information I wanted. And then some.

Lois was a large, handsome woman somewhere in her forties. She lived in a neat, modern house with all the appurtenances of solid middle-class life; the car in the drive appeared to be a Pontiac or Buick; the coffee was served with cookies, the china matched. She and her friends, the Nelsons, had just returned from a funeral and were therefore dressed to the nines, but nobody seemed uncomfortable or unacquainted with Sunday clothes. In short, there

were no liberal hippie activists in Red Wings and Gortex here. The Concerned Citizens of Owens Valley were not young transplants trying to defend their newly discovered outpost of Eden from corporate invasion; they were long-time residents who wanted to save what was left of their homes from blowing away, finally and irrevocably.

"It wasn't enough," Lois told me, "that the DWP got all the surface rights to water in the valley, and extended its aqueduct 105 miles north into the Mono Basin so it could divert all their water too. In 1970 they completed a second aqueduct that would increase the flow capacity to Los Angeles by 50 percent, and they started a systematic program to pump all the *ground*water out of here. Well, in about two years you could see the results of that. All the springs dried up, a lot of vegetation in the valley that depended on subsurface water died, the dust storms got worse and worse. We've always had dust storms, ever since DWP dried up Owens Lake and turned it into an alkali pit, but it got worse."

Lillian Nelson shook her head. "Lois, you remember the artesian wells on Mazourka Canyon Road?"

"I sure do."

"Dry as a bone. And that dust. Lord knows what it does to your lungs. They've just started to really study the problem because we've got a lot of respiratory disease among the older people. I don't hear anybody suggesting it does any good."

Lois ticked off a half dozen more environmental disasters and came back to the alkaline dust. "There's a very highly respected botanist who lives in Independence named Mary DeDecker, and she's found evidence of pine forest destruction from alkali deposits 10,000 feet above the lake. If it can kill a pine tree, what do you suppose it'll do to you?"

I allowed that I would not want to breathe it long enough to find out. I had seen that dry lake on a windy day and it looked like smoke from a raging forest fire.

"You know what some genius from the DWP office in Los Angeles said? He said the dust problem was caused by dune buggies."

Lois showed me a Forest Service map of the Owens Valley. Land owned by the city of Los Angeles appeared in yellow, an unbroken line running straight up the valley floor from Lone Pine to Bishop, two to three miles wide by 105 miles long. Everything adjacent was under the jurisdiction of the Bureau of Land Management and everything on both sides of that was part of the Inyo National Forest. In other words, except for a few small Indian reservations and a smattering of privately owned plots, everything surrounding the Los Angeles corridor belonged to the people of the United States. What had happened to the safeguarding of our property under federal and state environmental protection laws? Those were *my* trees and shrubs that were dying to keep the swimming pools in Beverly Hills filled and the driveways in Santa Monica flushed.

Lois and Lillian chuckled a little grimly. "That was the basis of the first Inyo County lawsuit against Los Angeles in 1972," Lois said. "We wanted the DWP to file an EIR [Environmental Impact Report], and asked the court to stop pumping until levels could be set that weren't harmful. We've been in litigation ever since; won almost every battle along the way, but we're still losing the war. The DWP doesn't care what the courts say, because they figure they can stall the legal process until finally there's nothing left for anybody to fight over."

Lois sorted through a stack of legal documents, looking for an injunction dating back to 1929 ordering the DWP to stop pumping and to cap wells on specified properties owned by a consolidation of plaintiffs. In those days it simply bought or forced out troublemakers and had all such injunctions dismissed.

"They have the money and the legal staff to sidetrack the courts for years," Lois said. "Take the EIR, for example. First they argued they were exempt from having to file because their new aqueduct was completed before the California Environmental Quality Act was made law. It took our suit at least a year to work its way to a state appeals court where they were finally told they *did* have to file, because extracting groundwater is an ongoing action, not a completed one. Then they fiddled around, quibbling about what had to be included and what didn't. They managed to take three years to come up with a draft *they* claimed was adequate. Fortunately the court insisted on reviewing it, which took another year, and then threw it out saying it was not only inadequate but deliberately misleading.

"I think they're on their third draft now. Isn't it astonishing that all those engineers and lawyers and experts on this and experts on that can't come up with an acceptable Environmental Impact Report in eight years? Maybe they aren't trying very hard."

ONE PLACE WHERE the DWP does seem to try very hard is in thinking up punitive measures to direct against those Owens Valley communities that have seen fit to contest its authority. Nothing much has changed since the days of William

"I allowed that I would not want to breathe it long enough to find out."

Mulholland. DWP consciousness has not been elevated greatly since 1906. The reaction to this policy of intimidation—which resulted in dynamite explosions punctuating the sweet summer nights back in the Twenties, and in Los Angeles aqueduct water flowing into the desert sand 200 miles north of its destination—may not turn out to be very different either. Not unless the Owens Valley gets some measure of satisfaction. Soon.

The most recent intimidation of the valley residents by the DWP began soon after Inyo County filed its 1972 suit demanding a cessation of pumping and preparation of an Environmental Impact Report. When the county asked the court to review the document that the DWP eventually produced, Los Angeles suddenly sent word that it was cutting off all water to its agricultural and recreational lessees and proceeded immediately to close valves that had remained open since the aqueduct's completion in 1913—valves apparently so rusty from lack of use that dynamite was needed to budge them. When it was loudly protested that this action was simply a punishment for Inyo's poor taste in trying to save its environment, the city engineer in charge of the aqueduct said it was not punitive but "educational."

Evidently the Owens Valley is full of slow learners. Their defiance continued in the courtroom and the DWP needed to offer a refresher course. In 1978 it declared its intention to install water meters in all residences (in spite of its own study, which had shown the cost of such installation to be economically impractical) and announced that it would give people one year to put their lines in order before real billing would commence. Mock bills were sent in the interim so that people could readjust.

Once again valley residents were furious. They had always been charged a flat rate for water and had never been careless with its use. During the great drought of 1976–77 they had conserved 25 percent of normal consumption, while Los Angeles refused to initiate *any* mandatory conservation measures until a court decision forced it to do so. Only then did the city grudgingly join the rest of California in efforts to cut water usage by 10 percent. (Angelenos actually reduced usage by 15 percent, an altruistic gesture generally lost on the rest of the state to the north, where 30 to 40 percent was the norm.)

The meters were installed—upside down, backward, badly. Sometimes they registered water, sometimes volcanic gas, sometimes nothing. Lois Wilson gave me a demonstration by turning on her garden hose. It writhed like a decapitated snake, hissing madly, the meter duly registering cubic feet of something per second, but whatever was coming out of the nozzle wasn't water. Lillian Nelson told me the same thing occurred in her lines up in Big Pine. "And that's the least of it," she said. "My husband and I are retired. We live in a single-family home. You want to guess what our 'projected' bill for forty-five days was?"

"Fifty dollars?" I said.

"Five hundred and sixty. Everybody was getting bills like that. They were trying to scare people out. I can't figure any other reason . . . except wanting to intimidate people here into leaving."

Whatever motivates DWP action, the installation of meters and water-rate hikes from $8.50 a month to $60, $70, $100 (Lillian's real bill, when it came, was nowhere near $560) did not intimidate many valley residents. They fought back with a meter strike, some refusing to pay anything, others refusing to pay more than the original flat rate. When the DWP began cutting off water in the homes of nonpayers and threatening once again to cancel land leases, the effect was like throwing gasoline on a grease fire. The night riders began to strike.

Now there are negotiations. But they are more placatory than real, and any concessions that the DWP implies it may make come with amendments demanding that existing lawsuits be dropped. The Concerned Citizens are willing to talk, but nobody trusts the adversary in the least. Tired of the endless stall, Inyo–Mono voters turned out in record numbers in November 1980 to pass an ordinance that would invest the county rather than the DWP with control of groundwater pumping levels. But the DWP does not recognize the legitimacy of the ordinance, fought its inclusion on the ballot from the outset, and now will certainly contest the legality of its passage. And while the "dialogue" goes on (and this is the point, many would argue), Los Angeles continues to pump the Bishop Cone dry, flagrantly ignoring a 1940 superior-court order prohibiting it from doing so.

A natural laboratory

As I drove north toward Big Pine the clouds that had been spitting sleet intermittently for the past three days suddenly lifted, and once again I found myself veering from shoulder to shoulder, unable to keep my eyes on the road in the overwhelming presence of the Sierran wall. From alluvial fans flocked with creosote brush

and sage the lower canyons climbed steeply, as if hacked into the fault-block by a broken cleaver. The mid-range was folded, bent, sheered, cusped into the cirques and moraines, cliffs and saddles, that rose into peaks along its jagged crest—the whole face a towering, unbroken rampart against the Pacific, glaring in an alabaster mantle of snow.

By comparison, the valley floor doesn't stand a chance. Not anymore. Dry, bleak, its vegetation stunted and sparse, it probably looks seedy and moth-eaten to most of the people speeding up Highway 395 on their way somewhere else, like Mammoth, Yosemite, Reno, Lake Tahoe. It looks, in fact, like most of the high desert country in the West—like an old chenille bedspread somebody threw out when its little green tufts bleached gray and its rich umber foundation faded dun. Its towns (only Lone Pine, Independence, Big Pine, and Bishop are big enough to notice), seem almost marginal, overly dependent on one-night tourists. Except at the northern end of the valley around Bishop, there is little agriculture—only occasional grazing and a few irrigated fields of alfalfa.

But this is all deception. There is more here than meets the gleam in a keno player's eye. The hot-dogger streaking toward his ski week at Mammoth Mountain may not know it or care about it, but he is passing through one of the most remarkable natural laboratories in the western United States, one that ought (according to botanist Mary DeDecker) to be protected and preserved in the same way national parks, monuments, and wild and scenic rivers are protected and preserved. I stopped in Independence to ask Mrs. DeDecker about damage caused by Los Angeles water diversion, and the conversation led inexorably toward that point. She has lived in the valley for forty years, knows it backward and forward, and is no doubt as indignant as the rest about water meters and punitive gestures on the part of the DWP. But her concerns are primarily ecological. "If you destroy the plants that have adapted to the Owens–Mono environment, nothing can replace them," she said. "That's why I'm concerned about subsurface pumping. There used to be slews, meadows, springs, marshes; now they're all gone. A whole chain of life has been destroyed, and there will be more to follow if control is not imposed."

I mentioned that I'd heard a proposal to introduce new varieties of plants from Australia and Israel that will tolerate almost anything—will grow, in fact, in the alkali basin of Owens Lake.

"Well, they're studying that," said Mrs. DeDecker, "but I'm very skeptical. If you can find something that will survive in Owens Lake, you may well have found a monster that will eventually take over the whole valley, something that will crowd out the native grasses and shrubs. The solution is not to solve one problem by creating another. One *could* just put water back into Owens Lake . . . ."

"Of course the Owens Valley will be bled dry."

THE MESSAGE IS of course commonplace in modern ecology. When you tinker with an established system you often get results you don't want. Import fisher cats to kill the porcupines in Vermont, and when they've mopped up the porcupines, they start looking around for something else to eat, like your chickens. Import a creeping kudzu vine from Japan for a hearty ground cover along a freeway, and it eats its way throughout the South. Drain a lake and impede national defense. Drill a well and dry up 2,000 square miles of farmland. On and on. Man is a tinkerer, and it seems rather idle to hope (much less expect) that he will stop. Of course the snail darter will perish. Of course Montana will be strip-mined. Of course there will be genetic engineering. Of course the Owens Valley will be bled dry. Perhaps all one can do is kick and scream to slow the process down. Or, if one lives in Inyo County, hope that some computer at the Nellis Air Force Range and Nuclear Testing Site will run amuck and drop a big one on the corner of Sunset and Vine.

Because Los Angeles is not going to go away. It needs water and power. When the Central Arizona Project goes on line and Arizona's share of Colorado River water, now used by southern California, is diverted to Phoenix, Tucson, et al., then Los Angeles's problems are going to increase considerably. The prospect makes a lot of people in northern California ecstatic. But the Owens Valley model, the dogged tenacity of the DWP to provide water and power no matter at whose expense and in spite of all attempts to curtail it through court orders and conservation methods, should be fair warning. It is idle to hope that the people of Los Angeles will find a metaphoric Jesus in the brotherhood of natural resources. And even if they did, the DWP (Devil Without Portfolio) is not accountable directly to the people of Los Angeles. It answers to its own commissioners, who answer to the mayor and the city council. In short, it operates in virtual anonymity and (if history tells us anything) regards as inherent its right to the product it sells, regardless of consequences to the environment. Anybody's environment. Teddy Roosevelt said it: "the infinitely greater interest to

be served . . . ." Los Angeles is no more interested in the problems of the Owens Valley, or the Mono Basin, or the Sacramento delta, or Colorado's western slope (all sources, existing or proposed, of its water supply) than it is in the air quality around Page, Arizona, or the four corners. It needs, wants, must have, will get more water. And to this end it is not only pumping the Owens Valley dry, it is draining Mono Lake in the next basin north along the eastern slope of the Sierra.

A "solemn, silent, sailless" sea

I DROVE NORTH TOWARD the town of Bishop and then over Wheeler Ridge into Mono County, climbing sharply to Sherwin Summit and then leveling out for thirty or forty miles through piñon and juniper woodland and forests of jeffrey pine and red fir. Stands of aspen dotted the open slopes to the west, and there was snowbush, paintbrush, corn lily, and angelica scattered through the understory. I had planned to sidetrack from Big Pine to see the bristlecone forest up in the White Mountains, 12,000 feet above sea level, but the snow was too deep and the road still closed. I'd have liked to have taken Methuselah's Walk through that wind-blasted, frozen, rockbound area and had a look at the oldest living thing on the face of this earth, a gnarled, twisted, forked, tortured old bristlecone, 4,600 years old, that looked in photographs more like Grendel's ganglia than a tree. It was hard to imagine something born about the time of Babylon, hitting its stride around the birth of Christ, still pottering along while mankind littered the heavens with orbital junk and strove to clone itself in a petri dish. I had to assume it would still be around my next time through.

A herd of thirty or forty deer bounded across the road a hundred yards in front of me, and somewhere just south of Deadman's Summit, before the highway dropped into the Mono Basin, a bobcat appeared at the edge of the woods, made an instant calculation of my approaching speed, and cleared the road in two swift bounds. The wind had come up, buffeting the truck, and the familiar cloud cover drifted over the Sierra crest.

The Mono craters appeared on my left, barren volcanic cones lying like mollusks about the sand flats and pumice; then Mono Lake itself, 45,000 acres of gray, metallic water, with moonscape towers of calcium carbonate rising just beyond the banks of its sullen shore. Bubbling up over the centuries to calcify like stalagmites, this deposit lurked beneath the surface as well, waiting patiently to disembowel the water-skiers who no longer came, the swimmers who no longer dove from beached docks rotting in the mud. An Ice-Age lake, possibly the oldest in North America, dying. Gone to Los Angeles. Since the aqueduct was extended into the Mono Basin in 1940 the lake had dropped 44 vertical feet; since diversion capacity was increased in 1970 it had receded at the rate of two feet per year, with only one of the five major streams feeding into it allowed to flow. Before long it would be a chemical sump, an alkali desert surrounded by evil-smelling mud, an airborne disaster blowing mineral salts 20,000 feet into the air (already pilots have mistaken its dust storms for volcanic eruptions), and threatening the pine forests in Yosemite Park to the west, the bristlecones to the south. Before long it would be, in fact, the "solemn, silent, sailless" sea that Mark Twain described when he first saw it in 1870.

SO LUNAR IN APPEARANCE is this body of water, so chemically unique in its heavy concentration of carbonates, sulfates, and salt that it has for years been thought of as "dead," though it is not. Its high salinity excludes fish life but not algae, not brine shrimp, not brine flies—all that tasty invertebrate food on which gulls, grebes, and (although no longer) Paiute Indians thrive. It is, on the contrary, one of the most life-productive lakes in the world, a veritable Mono Hilton for aquatic birds migrating across the continent—such as the 100,000 Wilson's phalaropes that stop in late summer on their way to Argentina, or the million or so eared grebes that come in the autumn and cover the water like a feathered blanket. It is the maternity ward for nearly the entire breeding population of California gulls, 50,000 of which come to nest on the small islands off its northern shore.

Dead? Hardly. Not yet. And not at all if the Mono Lake Committee, the Friends of the Earth, the Audubon Society, the Sierra Club, and a far-flung contingent of conservationists have their way. But their way is basically through the courts, the law; and if the Owens Valley is any example, the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power is exempt (through circumlocution and evasion) from the law. The courts move slowly. Legislation is a tedious process. And while the talk goes on—the charges and countercharges, the lobbying, the token gestures of accommodation (DWP has volunteered, for example, to allow up to 50,000 acre-feet to flow into the lake

this year, because the snow pack was so heavy they couldn't use it all)—the water level drops, the salinity increases to a point where even brine shrimp may choke, a land bridge to the islands emerges slowly from the murky water, and coyotes begin the decimation of the gull colony. This year, with the flow of surplus water, the lake is up a foot; about 80 percent of the gulls have returned to nest. But next year? And when Arizona begins to take its share of Colorado River water?

A COUNTRY OF wonderful contrasts," John Muir said, "hot deserts bounded by snow-laden mountains, cinder and ashes scattered on glacier-polished pavement, frost and fire working together in the making of beauty." From Conway Summit, a few miles past Lee Vining, I stopped to look back down 2,000 feet into the Mono Valley and south over the volcanic cones to the lateral range of mountains that divide this watershed from the Owens Valley. How much would it cost to save it all? According to a recent California Department of Water Resources report—not much: installation of efficient plumbing devices, more careful irrigation of lawns and gardens, a slight reduction of water pressure, more use of dry-climate plants. One brick in every toilet in Los Angeles would be enough to save Mono Lake.

As I put the truck in gear and headed north toward Carson City, I was faintly amused by the euphemistic label attached to that entity charged with providing our essential services —the "public utility." What public? Why does a "public utility" think its obligation to the public stops at the faucet and the power pole? Or to one segment of the public and not another?

I was reminded of a letter Bernard DeVoto once wrote to the editor of the *Denver Post* on a different, though not unrelated, matter: "You are certainly right when you say 'us natives' can do what you like with your scenery. But the National Parks and Monuments happen not to be your scenery. They are our scenery. They do not belong to Colorado or the West, they belong to the people of the United States, including the miserable unfortunates who have to live east of the Allegheny hillocks."

Most of Inyo and Mono counties falls into a similar category—BLM land and Forest Service land, i.e., public land. Even land belonging to the city of Los Angeles presumably belongs to a public, not a private, corporation. To allow the life-sustaining element of an environment as biologically, ecologically, geologically, and aesthetically rich as this to flow into the Pacific Ocean through a sewer pipe is an act of criminal negligence on a national scale. If "National" is the magic word in preserva-

"The American Way of seizure and exploitation has a long history but a dubious future."

Peter T. Vorster

Mono Lake looking south to the Mono Craters. The Sierra Nevada Mountains are in the far background.

tion (as in "Park" and "Monument"), then maybe Mary DeDecker is right and we should create a new classification. Laboratory. As in National Laboratory. As in Study. Observe. Learn. Adapt. Don't tinker.

The future of exploitation

THE PRIMARY questions raised by the history of the Los Angeles DWP in the Owens Valley—the legitimacy of sacrificing a small rural community to a large urban one (putting the "needs" of the many above the needs of the few), and the legitimacy of destroying a natural environment to help create an artificial one—are linked, and opponents will answer them in opposite ways. Obviously many more forces, with incomparably greater power, are on the side of the DWP than on the side of the residents of the Owens Valley–Mono Basin. But the future may not be. The American Way of seizure and exploitation has a long history but a dubious future. It has produced ghost towns before this, when the resources ran out and the frenzy cooled and the fortune hunters drifted away. Without suggesting that Los Angeles will become a ghost town, one knows that in the arid West there are many communities whose growth is strictly limited by the available water. To promote the growth of any community beyond its legitimate and predictable water resources is to risk one of two things: eventual slowdown or collapse and retrenchment to more realistic levels, or a continuing and often piratical encroachment on the water of other communities, at the expense of their prosperity and perhaps their life.

Man, the great creator and destroyer of environments, is also part of what he creates or destroys, and rises and falls with it. In the West, water is life. From the very beginning, when people killed each other with shovels over the flow of a primitive ditch, to the present, when cities kill each other for precisely the same reasons and with the same self-justifications, water is the basis for Western growth, Western industry, Western communities. Eventually some larger authority, state or federal, will have to play Solomon in these disputes. That, in fact, is precisely what Gifford Pinchot and Theodore Roosevelt did back in 1906. Their trouble was that they made a decision that was politically sound, but environmentally and ethically wrong. □

FOR MOZART, FROM THE BEGINNING

So magnified with new light
as to have become estranged
from the simple work, the song
continues itself. And since

from the blue radiance of the beginning
it rose into these minor volumes
of the greater light we must
from the beginning have contained;

and since the implacable light of the new sun
shone down upon the earth in which everything
was true, since then—
in the line of those few

who, seeing clearly by this light
have been somehow informed to choose
to love us and we have perhaps
loved back—there has been this one

to whom we might, with something
like the ease of instinct, speaking with something
like joy and in the fullness
of praise, have found it possible

to have cried aloud, but did not, that he
is indeed and always loved, who,
against all amulet and recipe, against
the cold gratuities of the subjectless,

seized in the real and made to flash forth
the mute transparencies
of matter, continued
the Creation, his heart so new,

boundless and unaltered, so
inhabited by beatitude,
as to have occasioned us to rise
from the regions of dissemblance toward one

another; and this despite
the effronteries of the disparate
body, sad goiter
of the other, because

his heart, and precisely by power
of the disaccord, from the first
instant of the first
spasm of light, prime turbulence, chord

of the Beginning, intent
on the immaculate bond of the ensemble, free
to cherish the light, beat, measured itself
and never otherwise gave voice

to the gorgeous numbers
of the increate sensation,
the disinterested poetry
of the source.

—John Engels

Copy

Independence, Cal.
March. 21st. 1927

Hon. Will. C. Wood, State Bank Examiner.
Sacramento California.

My Dear Mr. Wood:-

A few days ago I had the pleasure of meeting your representative, Mr. Angell, who called for the purpose of obtaining information to guide you in passing on the application for a bank charter for some point in Owens Valley. The answer I gave him in reply to a form questionaire could so inadequately convey to you the important facts which I feel you should know and understand in this particular situation, that I am prompted to take the liberty of writing you this letter.

My people are pioneer farmers in the little valley and I was born and raised here. No one is more familiar with the struggle of our communities than I am, hence I feel competent to place before you facts which may be of use to you in this instance. In using the word " struggle" I have not in mind the difficulties and hardships of the pioneer, which to a greater or lesser degree was borne by all pioneer farmers, but to the almost unbelievable struggle to get from the City of Los Angeles proper compensation for owners of their lands and water, when through the City's lack of foresight, in not providing mountain storage, or facilities for tapping underground storage, it become necessary to purchase and turn back to desert the valleys, fertile farm lands, when the dry years came.

We were fortunate in having in our midst then two men, W.W.Watterson, President and M. Q. Watterson Cashier of the Inyo County Bank who had the necessary financial strength, ability and fearlessness to be of untold aid in our distress, and if it had not been for their counsel and leadership, I know that our citizens would have left this valley without means to re-establish themselves elsewhere. I have heard it said by city of Los Angeles sympathisers and thoughtless people here that there would have been no trouble in Owens Valley if the Wattersons had kept out of the fight. That is a shallow statement for I believe through my knowledge of the type of the people here that there would have been trouble of the darkest and bloodiest kind in Owens Valley had no leaders arisen such as the Wattersons to fight for justice for them.

It is regrettable that the public, particularly a rural public so seldom appreciate and so quickly forget the efforts of men who sacrifice for public service. Most of those who benefitted the greatest by the Watterson's efforts and sacrifice have scattered to other sections of the West, but the few of us who are left and appreciate what they have done would like to see them remain here, hope that no condition will be created that would farther curtail what depleted banking that will be left.

Respectfully submitted,

Jess Hessian.

J.H./L

429½ South Virginia Street,
Reno, Nevada.
March 8, 1928.

Mrs. Elsie Watterson,
1709 Hill Drive,
Eagle Rock, California.

My dear Madam:

Very many thanks for your sweet letter of March 1st. In fact, it was so frank and kind of you to write me as you did that your letter brought tears to my eyes.

I know something of the very difficult situation and the terrible strain through which your brothers had to pass; and you may be perfectly sure, had I had my newspapers myself in California, there would have been a lot of fur flying before those two very fine boys were "put away."

I spent some time in the Owens Valley this fall and went into the subject rather thoroughly. Afterwards I had quite a chat with Mr. Boody, who is the present publisher of the paper I used to own, as well as with Mr. Hearst and Mr. Spreckles; but I could not make any of them see the point I was driving at and it appears they all thought that your brothers were guilty and should be sent to the penitentiary.

If I had the type of pen necessary, I would like nothing better than to go into the Owens Valley and write up the very sad situation that exists there, and the ruthless methods employed by the City of Los Angeles to crush those who oppose them. But unfortunately, I am not thus gifted and at present, with my own difficulties, particularly in California, I could do no one good in anything I might say there until my own troubles have been somehow smothered and a new lease on life secured.

Perhaps some day when things change for all concerned I may have the pleasure of meeting you and of talking over with you your difficulties. And until then, please believe me your friend.

Very sincerely,

Cornelius Vanderbilt Jr.

CV:P

429 South Virginia Street,
Reno, Nevada.
April 11, 1928.

Miss Elsie Watterson,
San Mateo,
California.

My dear Miss Watterson:

Yours of recent date has been brought to my attention. Very many thanks.

It happens that I am in a great rush at this time, but I will write to you at length again.

Yours sincerely,

Cornelius Vanderbilt Jr

CV:P

429 South Virginia Street,
Reno, Nevada.
March 21, 1928.

Miss Elsie Watterson,
1709 Hill Drive,
Eagle Rock, Califomia.

My dear Miss Watterson:

Again thanks for yours of March 19 from which I have again quoted.

Some day perhaps we will be able to get together; at least I hope so, and then if we have time we can discuss the sad, sad situation.

I am just leaving for Wahmonie and the flood area but am afraid will not get down as far as Eagle Rock.

Again thanks for your very many kindnesses,

Yours sincerely,

Cornelius Vanderbilt Jr

CV:P

San Francisco
December 12, 1928

Mr. Charles L. Neumiller
Chairman California Prison Board
San Quentin, California

Dear Mr. Neumiller:

The prison board, I am informed, will consider the cases on December 18 of W. W. and M. Q. Watterson, brothers and former bankers of Inyo county. As a near relative and friend of the two men I feel it my duty to present for your consideration certain circumstancer surrounding their cases which are known to me personally and which it is possible would not otherwise come before you or your Honorable Board.

It was my privilage to become intimately acquainted with Wilfred and Mark Watterson during my residence in Bishop, Inyo county, for the period from 1908 to 1912 when I published the Owens Valley Herald, and as a result of the family tie then formed I have been in touch with them ever since. Their family history is well known to me as is the history of their lives in Owens Valley, the rise and progress of their business careers, and finally the unusual and amazing chain of circumstances wherein they became enmeshed and the force of which in the end crushed and wrecked them together with their fortunes and their families.

The conditions in the valley under which they lived particularly during the last eight or ten years, were so remarkable and abnormal that anyone subjected to them as they were could have come out only in one of two ways, either as heroes, hardened and made capable by the fire, or as victims utterly broken and crushed by the forces they sought to withstand. This was apparent to me long before the bank crash, though I had no intimation of the desperate condition of their affairs. It was so apparent that at one time I suggested and even urged them to sell their holdings and leave the field of battle. Their reply was: " The people here lookk upon us as their leaders. They would consider us traitors if we left."

The Watterson families---there were three of them, all brothers, sometime immigrants from the Isle of Man, engaged in the sheep business in Kern county---came to Inyo county in 1886. Wilfred and Mark Watterson's father purchased a large ranch from which he operated his sheep business, pasturing his flocks on mountain ranges during the summer, and wintering them on the valley ranch near Bishop in winter. Wilfred is the oldest of six children; Mark is next, and there are four girls, my wife being the third in line. From the time they were old enough---about 12 years---the two boys helped at sheep herding, attending a one-rom country school during the months that the sheep did not need them. The education of both was limited to the opportunities provided by this school, with a few scattered hours put in at an academy in Bishop later. Their real education came from life, and attended their early struggles in the business world.

Wilfred in 1896 purchased an interest in a small hardware store in Bishop, and thus began his business career. In this store was located at that time the only safe in the valley. People voluntarily brought their money to him for safe-keeping, for the valley had no bank. This continued for about six years until the Inyo County Bank was opened, the first in the valley, by the four members of the family, father and mother and two sons. W.W. was made president and Mark the cashier. That arrangement was never changed. The parents backed the banking venture with their resources including the 600-acre ranch, which some years ago was sold for $200,000.

In his position as informal banker for the valley while he ran the hardware store, Wilfred acquired the reputauion and character for honesty and square dealing which even the bank crash has not wiped out, for throughtout the valley are hundreds of people, most of whom suffered losses in the crash, who believe in him and in his honesty of purpose as strongly as ever, and in this character and reputation for squareness and honesty his brother Mark holds his full share. This faith in their character is also held by practically every business man outside the valley with whom for many years they had large dealings.

Through a period of thirty years they were engaged in business, banking, farming and mining, uniformly successful in all their enterprises, and because of their fine reputation people trusted them with money for investments. The hardware store became a large machinery and supply house doing at times $600 per day, and paying a fine profit. The banks which grew to six in number paid dividends. A garage representing an investment of $65,000 earned at the rate of 8 per cent on ~~$22,~~ $200,000 during 1925 and 1926. This business which carried the Ford agency, was recently sold by the Receiver for Watterson Bros. for $25,000.

The whole valley with a population of some 6,000 people came to look upon Wilfred and Mark Watterson as friends, mentors and business advisors. Through their entire banking career they had never foreclosed a single farm mortgage. Their acts of personal benevolence and charity, always done in secret, were legion. Both men were married and the head of growing families. This was the picture up to about 1922 when the hand of a cruel fate suddenly appeared from the south and swept over the Owens Valley.

It was my opportunity in 1924 to write the first story which the outside world received of the coming of that fate, a story which carried the title of "The Valley of Broken Hearts". I shall not attempt here to review any of this story, but the title was no figment of my imagination; it was a description of the stark reality which I found then on my first return to the ~~W~~ Owens Valley since 1912. It was the story of the physical and moral devastation of what was by nature designed as one of the most charming and beautiful valleys of all California. Wilfred and Mark Watterson were the embattlements against which the forces of devastation broke, and no one can of course begin to understand what it was that made these two menillegally take maney from their own banks to battle against these forces unless he had lived with them through all these bitter years

It is no mystery to me, even though I did not live through this cataclysm with them, why so many people in Inyo are loyal to them and believe as I do that they are guilty of a legal but no moral wrong

The threat of complete destruction reached the valley in the autumn of 1923 when the City of Los Angeles began to make wholesale pruchases of irrigated lands and by withdrawal of the water permitted the ranches to return to sagebrush wastes. The panic which seized the people was so profound that the entire irrigated area of the valley, some 100,000acres was menaced by forced sales. Mass meetings were held. A request came for a sale price on the whole area, and an offer was made for $8,000,000- The city turned down the offer, Mulholland declaring he could and would buy the land for $4,000,000;-- $40 an acre But the Towns-- Bishop, Big Pine, Independence, Lone Pine, Laws, were left unprotected. What should become of them? The Wattersons --- Wilfred and Mark advised against the sale, and urged the land holders to hang on and fight. These lands have been all sold since to the city: but the price received was $12,000,000. It was Wilfred and Mark Watterson alone, from their position as valley bankers, who accomplished that.

They attempted more. To preserve the integrity of the towns of the valley in four of which they had banks they undertook to build up industries which would in a measure devdlop the support that was failing from the devastation of the farming areas. They recapitalized the Natural Soda Products Company engaged in making soda ash from the brine of Owens Lake, they took over a moribund tungsten mine, since proven the largest in America, They established the Coso Mineral Springs concern for the purpose of bottling and selling healing mineral waters from the natural springs at Coso.

They invested their own resources in these enterprises and when outside capital failed them through opposition of some city interests, they accepted the financial aid of valley people in operating these enterprises. All of them began to pay, but the drain of capital into them was terrific for so small a community. But the enterprises at one time gave work to mare than 600 people and provided a payroll for the whole valley. An unlooked for circumstance now developed. Through the wholesale purchase of irrigated lands and the diversion of the water by the city the water in the Owens Lake began to recede rapidly, and in less than a year fell back nearly three miles from the soda plant.

With an investment already standing at $1,000,000, it was now necessary to almost rebuild the plant for handling the soda in dry deposits in place of the former soda brine, and in providing new facilities to bring the raw material in from the sun-baked crust of the lake bed. New capital of $500,000 had to be found to make these forced changes in order to keep the plant going and the previous investment intact.

Bonds, stock and notes of the company were marketed in the valley to raise this money. Much money was raised that way. But credit on the outside failed altogether. Inyo county was in a state of war against the city of Los Angeles and no one would send money there for investment or make any loans except for short time and on banking collateral.

It was doubtless at this timw that faced with the complete collapse of the whole structure, the loss of this to the valley investors, and the wreckage it would cause to the valley, that the desperate means were resorted to of using bank funds illegally. The whole valley was just then in negotiations with the city for reparations on property losses caused in the valley, and it is possible that these negotiations and the hope they raised ~~efr~~ for the rescue of the whole situation and the whole valley were in part ~~t~~ responsible for the use of bank funds in the emergency. Certainly, it was at this time that word came to the two brothers that they were to be wrecked financially in order that a surrender might be forced upon the valley in the water war.

The wreck, however, could not be brought about until all ~~f~~ of the farmers had sold their land at a fair price. It did occur, however, before the question of reparations to the towns people was settled.

During this period of civil war in Inyo county there was created a typical war psychology. The word "traitor" came into the daily vocabulary of the people, and to be squeamish at moments of crisis in ways and methods used to help the Inyo people was a form of disloyalty. The battle for the farmers had been won. It was now a question of securing reparations for the injured towns people. If that could be brought about, property losses would be made up and the solidity of the banks re-established. Presumably some of the facts of the real situation became known, for when the Wattersons applied for a bank loan to replace the withdrawn funds, and brought security for the loan it was refused them. The crash followed.

None ~~of~~ these facts were permitted to come out at the trial. But three men who knew them, Mr. Meyers, president of the Los Angles Soap Co., one of the large customers of the soda plant, Mr. Douglas, a Director of the soap company, and Mr. Du Val of Du Val-Kirk, San Francisco, agents for the soda company, appeared at Independence at the close of the trial to make a plea with the ~~h~~ judge for probation. Their ~~a~~ attitude was that if Wilfred and Mark Watterson were permitted to remain in charge of these properties, under court guidance, they could work out the financial situation intact, repay all of the bank depositors, and save the investments made in the various Watterson industries.

District Attorney Hessian in conference on this proposal opposed probation. He said: "It will be better for them to serve at least a minimum sentence, for this will satisfy the opposition from the city, appease the depositors who are angry, and if this is agreed to by all, I will use my best endeavors at the expiration of a year to have the two men released."

The three men---Meyers, Douglas and Du Val--- were so impressed with Hessian's sincerity that they consented to the plan. Instead of asking for probation, or appealing the case, the Watterson Brothers accepted sentence at once and left the next day for San Quentin. In the meantime the Los Angles

Soap Company through Mr. Meyers and Mr. Douglas agreed to advance such money as would be needed to keep the properties intact for a year, and also to provide forthe families of the two men if necessary while they were in Prison. On this agreement the Los Angeles Soap Company has advanced $100,000, for the operation ~~t~~ of the soda plant alone. Even Judge Lambert of Kern county , who presided at the trial, was surprised that no probation was asked, nor any appeal taken. He imposed the minimum sentence he could under the law and made the sentence concurrent for all charges in the indictment.

Aside from the natural desire to see these properties salvaged, andall losses caused by their acts made good, the two brothers were to a large measure influenced in their decision to go to prison at once by the information circulated at the trial that if they were sent to prison the city would begin~~n~~ at once paying reparations to the people. This has not been done. Mr. Hessian has since become receiver for the Watterson Bros., & the holding corporation of all these enterprises, and as receiver has approved the sale of much of the property at sacrifice prices, receiving for some of the properties only sufficient to pay the debt against them. Under present arrangements very little if any money will be salvaged for the bank depositers or for the investors in the Watterson properties. It is, I understand, the opinion of Mr. Meyers and his associates that the Watterson Brothers alone can save the situation if they are released, and for that reason I wish to joinwith Mr. Meyers, Mr. Douglas and Mr. Du Val and such others as may have sent in letters that in hearing their cases on December 18, the prison board give sympathetic consideration to all these circumstances which I have here stated both in fixing the term of sentence for Wilfred and Mark Watterson, and in passing upon the matter of an early parole.

Very Respectfully

(C.E.K)

245 Market Street
Pacific Gas and Electric Company

ALBERT A. ROSENSHINE

JACOB H. HOFFMAN
ELBERT W. DAVIS
TEVIS P. MARTIN

LAW OFFICES
ALBERT A. ROSENSHINE
HUNTER-DULIN BUILDING
SAN FRANCISCO

TELEPHONE
DOUGLAS 3183
CABLE ADDRESS
"FEATHER"

January 6th,
1930.

Mr. Jerome Watterson,
Keeler, California.

Dear Mr. Watterson:

I have your letter of January 3rd in which you advise me of the condition of the immediate members of the families of Messrs. W. W. and M. Q. Watterson.

I am not familiar with the two cases involving the effort to set aside the homesteads declared on the property of the wives of these gentlemen but I will take the matter up at once with Mr. Davis and Mr. Hoffman, of my office, who have been attending to this phase of the litigation, and ascertain the facts and write you again as soon as I can reach a conclusion.

Your letter appealed to me very much and I want you to know that my attitude toward your father and your uncle is not one of resentment or illfeeling, and it certainly is not toward the members of their families. It does not, and it did not, make me happy to have this unfortunate affair end as it did, and I assure you that if there is anything that I can do to ameliorate the condition of your family I will do it, always bearing in mind, however, my duties as Superintendent of Banks. For my own part,- I do not believe that either of these men concealed money and, while I am not condoning what they did, I sympathize with them, and certainly with you.

I appreciate your writing me as you did and I will do what I can to hasten a disposition of the matter.

Very truly yours,

AAR:LB

December 2, 1930

Mr. Jerome Watterson
Box #605
Bishop, California

Dear Sir;

Your letter of November 26th received. In reply will say that Mr. La Bree, receiver of the Inyo County Bank, on a trip with me from Bishop to LosAngeles, made the statement that, if the City of Los Angeles had bought the different towns in Inyo County on the same time they had agreed to, which was the June before the bank failures, there would have been no failures, as the boys would have had the money to have taken care of their debts. He also made the statement that, if the boys had been on the job, they would have worked out to a great deal better advantage and, in his estimation, would have been able to make good.

Yours Truly,

A. B. Whieldon

A. B. Whieldon

bn

Mr. Daniel O'brien, Chairman,
State Crime Commission,
San Francisco, Cal.

Dear Mr. O'brien:

Up to six years ago, the writer, who is at present Chancellor to Bishop MacGinley, was Pastor of Inyo County. In my work there I was personally acquainted with the Watterson Brothers, who are now serving a term in San Quentin for spending the funds of their depositors in the Inyo County Bank. These gentlemen have now served, as I understand, about half of the required sentence, and are eligible for parole. I have been asked by some mutual friends to intercede for them on the grounds that justice has been satisfied.

While, as you understand from my calling, I cannot condone embezzlement, you can also see that my position and faith have taught me that mercy should temper justice. In this case, I sincerely believe that there were mitigating circumstances which should be taken in to consideration at this time.

In all my experience with the Wattersons, I never knew them to seek for personal gain at the cost of the inhabitants of the Valley who trusted them. They had ample opportunity to do so, for the Wattersons owned and controlled much of the farm land and most of the industry in that region. On the contrary, they lived modestly, even frugally, and fought consistently for their people against the encroachments of the Los Angeles Water Board. There were differences of opinion as to matters of policy from time to time, but in the main I agreed with them heartily.

While the revelation of theirspeculations was a shock to all of us who knew them, it never has been proved that the money was used otherwise than for the protection of the farmers in Owens Valley and for the extension of the life of the industries which kept the Valley alive. I refer particularly to the Soda Works at Keeler, upon which hundreds of thousands of dollars additional had to be spent in order to bring the raw material from the lake bed, which had been lowered by the diversion of the Valley waters to Los Angeles. As a dweller in the region for six years, I can readily understand how the Wattersons could yield to the temptation of "borrowing" money from their banks to keep the Valley alive while the City of Los Angeles browbeat and dragged through every court in the land, the poor and practically defenseless ranchers. At the same time, the Los Angeles bankers consistently refused to advance credit to the Wattersons as part of the same general policy of intimidation.

In short, I believe that the Wattersons have suffered enough for what they did. The law permits them the parole, and I do not believe they should suffer any longer than the law demands. In addition, if there is anything left to the discretion of the Parole Board, I believe it should err on the side of mercy.

Thanking you for any consideration you may give them, I am,

Very sincerely yours,
Very Rev. Monsignor John J. Crowley
Chancellor, Diocese of Monterey
Fresno

JJC/ICB
April 24, 1931

DEPARTMENT OF WATER AND POWER

CITY OF LOS ANGELES

METROPOLITAN 4200

207-9-11 SO. BROADWAY

BUREAU OF WATER WORKS & SUPPLY
WM. MULHOLLAND,
CHIEF ENGINEER AND GENERAL MANAGER

BUREAU OF POWER & LIGHT
E. F. SCATTERGOOD,
CHIEF ELECTRICAL ENGINEER AND GENERAL MANAGER

OFFICERS:
R. F. DEL VALLE
PRESIDENT
C. A. DYKSTRA
VICE PRESIDENT
JAS P. VROMAN
SECRETARY
L. M. ANDERSON
CONTROLLER

COMMISSIONERS:
JAMES B. BAKER
WILLIAM P. WHITSETT
R. F. DEL VALLE
C. A. DYKSTRA
JOHN R. HAYNES

IN REPLY REFER TO
JOHN T. MARTIN
RIGHT OF WAY AND LAND AGENT

August 13, 1926.

Mr. O. W. Larson,
Route 5, Box 77,
Petaluma, California.

Dear Sir:

Referring to your letter of August 11, 1926 relative to final payment on Contract of Purchase and Sale between yourself and the Board of Water and Power Commissioners of The City of Los Angeles,

I beg to advise that all payments covering Inyo County property are now being handled by the office of the Department of Water and Power at Bishop, California, and I am enclosing herewith a copy of a letter addressed to the said office, advising as to your inquiry as to the status of the purchase of the property mentioned in your letter. I would therefore suggest that you communicate with the addressee of the enclosed letter relative to this matter.

Trusting that this is the information desired by you, I am

Yours very truly,

John T. Martin
Right of Way & Land Agent.

JLD:OD
Enc.

M. Q. WATTERSON, PRESIDENT W. W. WATTERSON, VICE PRESIDENT
WM. J. GEORGE, CASHIER

FIRST NATIONAL BANK

CAPITAL AND SURPLUS $70,000.00

BISHOP, CALIFORNIA

Aug. 14, 1926.

Mr. O. W. Larson,
R. 5, Box 77,
Petaluma, Calif.

Dear Mr. Larson:

We have your letter of Aug. 11th relative to the final payment under your Contract of Purchase and Sale with the Board of Water and Power Commissioners of the City of Los Angeles and your check was forwarded to the Sonoma County National Bank of Petaluma several days ago and no doubt you have received the same by this time.

We are sorry that you had to wait so long but remitted you just as soon as the funds were released.

Assuring you that we are pleased to have been of service in this matter and with kindest personal regards, we remain

Yours very truly,

Wm. J. George, Cashier.

WJG:BC

August 13, 1926.

Department of Water & Power,
City of Los Angeles,
Box 608,
Bishop, California.

Attention Mr. Ford Hendricks

Gentlemen:

This office is in receipt of a letter from Mr. O. W. Larson, of Petaluma, California, a copy of which is enclosed herewith, making inquiry as to final payment on Contract of Purchase and Sale between the said party and our Board.

I am today advising Mr. Larson to communicate with you relative to the status of the transaction and I presume that in the event that it is in order to forward the demand covering the final payment to him that you will do so.

Yours very truly,

JLD:OD

Right of Way & Land Agent.

Enc.

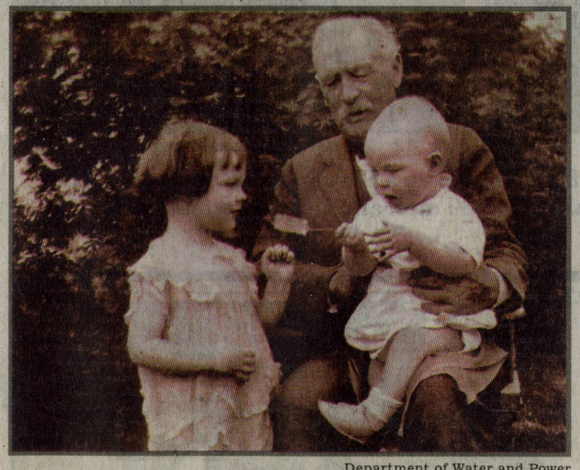
CATHERINE MULHOLLAND, 1923 - 2011

Los Angeles Times

REENACTMENT
In 1988, Catherine Mulholland, left, and L.A. Mayor Tom Bradley join City Council members at the edge of the Sylmar cascades for a reenactment of the opening of the Los Angeles Aqueduct 75 years before.

Author on family's legacy

CATHERINE MULHOLLAND, 1923 - 2011



Department of Water and Power

FAMOUS HERITAGE
Catherine Mulholland and her brother Richard with water engineer William Mulholland in 1927.

Historian explored grandfather's legacy

ELAINE WOO

Catherine Mulholland, a historian whose biography of her grandfather William Mulholland sought to correct the image of the man who was sometimes vilified for his central role in bringing water to Southern California, died of natural causes Wednesday at her Camarillo home. She was 88 and had been in decline for several months, her family said.

Mulholland was one of the last two grandchildren of the rugged Irish immigrant who oversaw the construction of the 230-mile aqueduct that carries water from the Owens Valley to Los Angeles. It [See **Mulholland,** A8]

[**Mulholland,** from A1]
is one of the greatest engineering feats of the 20th century and a continuing source of controversy for the water wars it provoked.

In high school, a teacher suggested that Mulholland read what historian Carey McWilliams and other writers had said about her grandfather. She was "sobered and perplexed" by their accounts, which cast him as one of the "exploitative overlords" of Southern California.

Probing forgotten records and family memories of a past that she said haunted her for years, she wrote "William Mulholland and the Rise of Los Angeles" (2000) to provide what she believed was a fairer, more nuanced view of the family patriarch, a ditch tender who rose to chief of what is now the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power.

William Mulholland, she said, had been "falsely accused of conspiring with vested interests in the San Fernando Valley in building the aqueduct." She portrayed him as a "pragmatic progressive" who was driven by a vision of public works for the greatest public good.

Securing the region's water future with the 1913 opening of the aqueduct made him such a hero that local leaders named a road after him — Mulholland Drive, which runs along the crest of the Santa Monica Mountains.

He was not beloved in other parts of the state, where farmers and other residents believed they had been swindled out of a precious resource.

The water engineer's career ended in infamy when another of his projects, the St. Francis Dam northeast of Castaic, collapsed in 1928, killing more than 400 people in the worst manmade disaster in California's history. Although the cause of the collapse was not clear, he accepted the blame and died a dispirited and silent man several years later.

History was not kind to him in the ensuring decades. From historians such as McWilliams to the 1974 film "Chinatown," he was portrayed as a figure ensnared in a conspiracy to steal water from the hapless residents of Owens Valley. The movie was loosely based on actual events but became so widely accepted as fact that strangers meeting his granddaughter would react by calling her "Mrs. Mulwray." In the film, Hollis Mulwray was the water department's chief engineer.

She conceived the book after moving back to the San Fernando Valley from the Bay Area in the late 1970s after an absence of several decades initiated in part out of a desire to distance herself from a complicated family history.

Born in Los Angeles on April 8, 1923, she grew up on the 600-acre Mulholland family ranch in the west San Fernando Valley with mother, Addie, the daughter of Calabasas homesteaders, and father, Perry, who was William's oldest son. She said her parents' desire for the best education made her an academic vagabond. She attended at least three different elementary schools before going to North Hollywood Junior High School and Marlborough School for Girls. She graduated from Canoga Park High School in 1940.

Writing in The Times in 1999, she said that when she left home to attend UC Berkeley she "welcomed the anonymity of a place where my name had no particular significance."

She had a bohemian urge for experiences at odds with her background. During a break from college to recover from an illness, she moved back to Los Angeles and convinced her parents to let her study musical improvisation with Lloyd Reese, a master jazz teacher. Reese's connections led her to a lifelong friendship with Charles Mingus, who was destined to become a legendary bassist and composer.

Under their tutelage, Mulholland explored the jazz haunts of Central Avenue and came to understand the racial restrictions of the time. She had long conversations about life and music with Mingus, who was black, but their talks usually took place "on the streets of East Los Angeles in the front seat of my mother's car (the only place we felt an interracial pair could safely talk without being rousted by a cop)," she recalled in 1999.

An English major, she earned a bachelor's degree from UC Berkeley in 1945 and a master's from Columbia University in 1947. She returned to Berkeley for postgraduate work and became friends with some of the era's leading avant-garde poets and writers, including Allen Ginsberg and Jack Kerouac. She had a brief romance with San Francisco Renaissance poet Jack Spicer before marrying Gerard T. Hurley, an English professor, in 1949.

She and Hurley divorced in 1976. She is survived by three children: William, of Richmond, Calif.; James, of Pensacola, Fla.; and a daughter, Catherine Hawkins, of Pebble Beach, Calif.

In the mid-1950s she wrote a play about her early years, "A Wedding in the Valley," which won a Phelan Award for artistic work by Californians.

After the divorce, Mulholland moved back to Southern California and discovered that the "quaint little western villages" that had made up the San Fernando Valley of her childhood had been paved over and "uglified." A Kmart occupied the land where her home had stood. The loss of personal landmarks — ironically, because of development made possible by her grandfather's importation of water from the north — impelled Mulholland to become a historian.

She told the history of her mother's family in her first book, "Calabasas Girls" (1976). Next she chronicled the rise of Owensmouth, the dusty town that grew into Canoga Park, in "The Owensmouth Baby: The Making of a San Fernando Valley Town" (1987).

When Mulholland decided to tackle her grandfather's story, she knew critics would question her objectivity. The story was one "with which in a sense I have lived all my life and which even now may be disbelieved," she wrote, "so fixed in some minds is the certainty of what transpired that nothing would alter their opinion."

Reviews were mixed. Ben Ehrenreich, writing in L.A. Weekly, said "William Mulholland and the Rise of Los Angeles" offered "few deep insights into either of its subjects, but rather expends most of its energy laboriously, and at times disingenuously, refuting the various conspiracy theories surrounding the city's purchase of Owens Valley land and the construction of the Los Angeles aqueduct."

BRIAN VAN DER BRUG Los Angeles Times

HISTORIAN
Catherine Mulholland wrote "William Mulholland and the Rise of Los Angeles" to expand on the record about her grandfather.

Writing in the Los Angeles Times, Jonathan Kirsch said the book told "a saga of truly heroic proportions ... with both grace and grandeur," while the New York Times called it an "even-toned biography" drawn from extensive sources, which included the water chief's personal office files.

"She was an excellent historian," said Abraham Hoffman, a Los Angeles Valley College professor who has written about the water wars between Owens Valley and Los Angeles. "Some people ... anticipated that she was going to do some whitewash of her grandfather. She did warts and all. The level of her research went far beyond what anyone else had done on the topic."

Some of the most poignant moments in her account came during her description of the St. Francis Dam disaster and aftermath. The flood raged for 54 miles through Ventura County agricultural communities, ending when it reached the Pacific Ocean. The official death toll was 450, but historians suspected that the number was much higher because hundreds of migrant workers may have been uncounted.

At the time authorities believed the dam broke because it had been built on the San Francisquito fault. Today, experts say the probable cause was a prehistoric landslide that could not have been detected in the 1920s.

When the senior Mulholland learned of the collapse, his granddaughter later reported, the first words he uttered were, "Please, God, don't let people be killed." During testimony at one of the hearings on the disaster, he sobbed and said he envied the dead.

Mulholland was only 5 when the dam broke, but she remembered how the accident drained her grandfather's spirit.

She also remembered an incident from a vacation some time later, when her father ran over a water hydrant with the family car, causing a gusher. He ran for help, leaving his father alone beside the shooting stream.

"Only the excitement and confusion of the scene registered on me then," Mulholland wrote, "but now, years later, the memory of that old man who had been one of the world's leading hydraulic engineers standing helpless by a broken water pipe outside a tourist cabin in the desert strikes me as one of those consummately ironic moments when the gods play their Olympian jokes and laugh in heartless derision at us mere mortals." He died in 1935 after a stroke.

Mulholland, who lived in Chatsworth for many years before moving to Camarillo in 2007, spent her last decades writing and lecturing about her grandfather.

elaine.woo@latimes.com

History of the Los Angeles Aqueduct

The history of the diversion of the Owens River to Los Angeles has been told many times by many people. Like any history lesson, to be accurate the past must be viewed through the eyes of those that lived at the time.

In the first decade of the Twentieth Century, environmental awareness was much different than it is today. Rivers than ran free to oceans or saline sinks were considered wastes of resources. There was no end to the rivers and basins that were being studied for their potential to be harnessed for the benefit of human economic activity.

The 11 families who founded Los Angeles in the late 1700's constructed the City's first water system, a brush dam across the river that diverted water to their adjacent fields. By the late 1800's that small system had become the water department of the City of Los Angeles.

Los Angeles, with its growing population and its immense potential, sought the opportunity to fulfill its potential, and it could only do so if a distant and available source of water could be found. The City's new water department had as an employee an Irish immigrant who had worked his way up from a ditch tender to superintendent, William Mulholland.

Mulholland recognized that since Los Angeles had doubled in size four times in 30 years, it would need a new water supply. A camping trip by former Los Angeles Mayor Fred Eaton and others to the Sierra Nevada in 1904 would lead to the new supply, as well as launch a long conflict.

Eaton, a trained engineer, saw the Owens River flowing southward and envisioned that it could be diverted hundreds of miles to Los Angeles. He convinced Mulholland to return to the Owens Valley to see the river, and in 1906 Los Angeles submitted an application for rights of way across federal lands to construct an aqueduct.

President Theodore Roosevelt, in approving the application, wrote that the Owens River water "... is a hundred or a thousand fold more important to the state and more valuable to the people as a whole if used by the City than if used by the people of the Owens Valley."

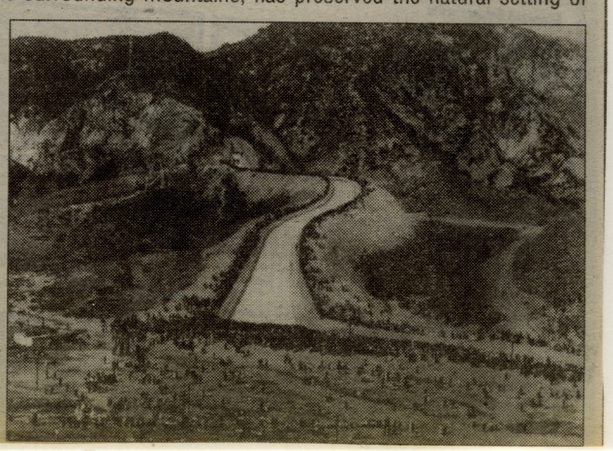
Construction on the Los Angeles Aqueduct began in 1908. Workers blasted and drilled 142 tunnels totaling 43 miles, excavated 61 miles of lined and unlined open channel using innovative electric shovels, and built more than 100 miles of covered conduit. In 1913 the Aqueduct opened to the cheers of thousands of people at the northern edge of the City.

In the 1920's, Owens Valley residents began to fight the City's water export. Confrontations escalated to several dynamitings of the Aqueduct. To secure its water rights, the City began to purchase extensive tracts of land in the Owens Valley, and many valley residents said that Los Angeles should buy out the entire area. The City proposed a plan that would leave 30,000 acres in the Bishop area free of City purchases, and offered to help promote the construction of a state highway to the area, thereby creating a local tourist industry.

The controversy was at its height when suddenly valley resistance was undermined. The Watterson brothers, owners of the Inyo County Bank and leaders of much of the opposition, closed their bank and were later tried and convicted of thirty-six counts of embezzlement.

In the face of the collapse of both resistance and the Owens Valley economy, the City sponsored a series of repair and maintenance programs for Aqueduct facilities that stimulated local employment. The City of Los Angeles also continued to purchase private land holdings and their water rights to meet the City's increasing water demands.

Today, the Department of Water and Power owns 314,000 acres of land in the Eastern Sierra. Most LADWP land is leased, and the City's long-standing land use policy requires that 75% of these leased lands remain open to the public for recreational use. This policy, along with federal management of public lands in the surrounding mountains, has preserved the natural setting of the region.



Over 240,000 acres of DWP land are leased to ranchers for cattle grazing and other activities, and of 18,000 acres that are irrigated, 2,000 are allocated for alfalfa production that requires little use of fertilizers, herbicides, or pesticides. Grazing and recreation are compatible with watershed protection and are an important part of a land management program that provides viable business opportunities while satisfying the goal of water quality protection.

Mulholland's Los Angeles

Whether a pioneer or a pirate, or both, his aqueduct made today's metropolis possible.

7-10-2011

The Times' editorial board meets around a long table in a room hung with images of the interlocking histories of this newspaper and its city — of Otis Chandler and the election of Ronald Reagan, our endorsement of Barack Obama and the burial of President Nixon.

At the head of that table is a reprint of the front page from Nov. 6, 1913. It memorializes the opening of the Los Angeles Aqueduct, the defining event of this city's early existence, a fact recognized by the day's headline: "Silver Torrent Crowns the City's Mighty Achievement." Ever since, historians have wrestled over the dealings and subterfuge that brought water to Los Angeles — a debate revived this week with the passing of Catherine Mulholland, whose grandfather and biographical subject, William Mulholland, was either pioneer or pirate, or perhaps both.

Some of the facts are uncontested. Representatives of Los Angeles in the early 20th century recognized that the city's growth would be stymied without a reliable source of water. They found one in the eastern Sierra Nevada, where the Owens River gathered runoff and carried it to Owens Lake. They quietly began to buy up parcels in the Owens Valley, hiding their true intentions for fear of driving up the cost of land. Then, as word began to leak out, they disclosed that they were bent on diverting that water to Los Angeles. As Catherine Mulholland herself wrote: "Few seemed to care about the action's moral niceties."

Among those who most prospered from that achievement were the owners of the Los Angeles Times, and the suspicion has long endured that Mulholland and the city's power brokers conspired to snatch water for their own enrichment. Catherine Mulholland portrayed her grandfather less venally, as a devoted public servant looking out for the future of his city. She made a good case, though it did not convince everyone.

We will not resolve that matter here, and we're probably not the ones to do it. But this much can be said: Without William Mulholland, there would be no modern Los Angeles. His engineer's eye plotted the Los Angeles Aqueduct and brought the water over 230 miles to these dry valleys by gravity alone, an engineering marvel and a civic triumph, albeit at the expense of the Owens Valley, which quickly turned to dust. On the day the water first cascaded down that aqueduct, Mulholland delivered what the Los Angeles Times, admittedly not without bias, described as "the most eloquent and effective address of the day." As every student of California history knows, it consisted, in its entirety, of this: "There it is. Take it!"

Not until Richard Riordan visited the Owens Valley in 1997 did a Los Angeles mayor dare set foot again in the land whose water made this city possible. Long-memoried residents carried signs deriding him as "King Riordan," and one suggested a little arsenic would spice up his sauce at the barbecue held in his honor. He handled it in good cheer. Without the aqueduct, there wouldn't have been much of a city for him to run.

Photo exhibit focuses on the construction of the 233-mile long Aqueduct

By Jon Klusmire
Special to the Register

5-9-2013

The Eastern California Museum will unveil its new photo exhibit, "Building Bill's Ditch, The Los Angeles Aqueduct, 1913-2013," on Saturday May 11, starting at 10 a.m.

The exhibit provides a glimpse into the five years it took to design and build the 233-mile long Los Angeles Aqueduct. In addition to about 100 photos, many of which have rarely been seen in public, the exhibit also features documents and artifacts from the Museum's collection and from Owens Valley residents.

From a photo of the first crew of workers and wagons coming to the Owens River at what could be the Los Angeles Aqueduct Intake in 1908 to the roaring crowds that greeted the rush of water into Los Angeles in 1913, the exhibit explores the many aspects of the construction of the Los Angeles Aqueduct, which workers called "Bill's Ditch," in reference to William Mulholland, the chief engineer for the Los Angeles Department of Water. That "ditch" has been delivering water from the Eastern Sierra to the city of Los Angeles for the past 100 years and continues to perform its intended function in this, its centennial year.

A segment of the exhibit highlights the Occupation of the Alabama Gates in 1924, which was the high water mark, so to speak, of the Owens Valley Water Wars. A short summary of the impact of the Second Aqueduct and the current, ongoing legal and environmental issues surrounding the Aqueduct, the Eastern Sierra and the City of Los Angeles is also included.

By changing the course of the Owens River, the Aqueduct changed the course the history of Los Angeles and the Eastern Sierra. "Building Bill's Ditch," however, narrows more than a century of history into a detailed look at the actual construction of the Aqueduct.

Thus, the exhibit is devoted to the massive engineering, logistical and construction feats needed to build the Aqueduct. The exhibit's depiction of the laborers and workers who toiled in Sierra snow and desert heat put a bit of a human face on the massive project.

The exhibit is divided into sections. First is the Aqueduct Intake, which diverts the flow of the Owens River into the man-made channel. Digging that channel took several types of floating, suction or "dipper" dredges. Those impressive machines worked while floating in the channel from the Intake at Aberdeen to the Alabama Gates to create the "unlined" portion of the Aqueduct.

Starting at the Gates, "the ditch" had to be scooped out of the rocky soil with a variety of large, electric-powered shovels and excavators. A section of the exhibit looks at the two hydro-electric power plants in the Owens Valley – Division Creek and Cottonwood – which supplied the electricity for the construction effort.

Starting at the Gates, the channel was lined with concrete until it reached Haiwee Reservoir, which was constructed at the same time as the Aqueduct. A series of photos shows the steps it took to dig out the channel, set concrete forms, then pour and finish the concrete on the walls and the bottom of the Aqueduct channel.

Entering the desert, the Aqueduct went underground in either concrete "conduits" or steel pipes, some large enough to drive an automobile through, and a series of tunnels. The most dramatic sections of the Aqueduct are the imposing siphons, made up of steel pipe crawling up hills and dropping down the other side. The Jawbone Siphon is the largest and most well-known.

Getting all the men and material to the sprawling construction site was a feat in itself, and one accomplished with a combination of mules, wagons, trains and just plain muscle.

The muscle was provided by the thousands of men who toiled on the project. Many of them lived in construction camps that stretched from Manzanar to Southern California. A large selection of photos depicts life in the camps and how the aqueduct workers also found time to enjoy the high Sierra by hunting and fishing, for example.

Also on display are sets of technical drawings detailing the specifications for the different sizes of channels, the siphons, Haiwee Reservoir, typical hydro plants and two large graphs that show the river flows of both the Owens River and the Los Angeles River in the early 1900s.

The public is invited to explore the exhibit starting at 10 a.m. The Museum will be open until at least 6 p.m. on Saturday, May 11, in conjunction with the Friends of the Eastern California Museum Annual Barbecue (see page 8), which starts at 4 p.m. The museum is located at 155 N. Grant St., three blocks west of the Historic Courthouse in Independence. For more information, call (760) 878-0258.

'Vision or Villainy' author talks about Austins, L.A.'s celebration

Free presentation to include Q&A in American Legion Hall in Independence

6-20-2013

By Jon Klusmire
Special to The Inyo Register

Sometimes it's best to start at the beginning and finish at the end.

That's the approach that will be taken by historian and author Dr. Abraham Hoffman when he discusses two critical aspects of the Los Angeles Aqueduct story: The public role played by Mary and Stafford Austin to protest Los Angeles' land purchases in 1905, and the culmination of the Aqueduct's construction when Owens River water rushed down the Cascades in 1913.

The public is invited to the free presentation by Hoffman, author of "Vision or Villainy," an award-winning work on Owens Valley water history, on Saturday, June 22, starting at 7 p.m. in the American Legion Hall in Independence. There will also be a question-and-answer session, and copies of Hoffman's book will be for sale.

Stafford Austin was more than Mary's husband in 1905, when he worked in the Federal Land Office in Independence. He is the one who became suspicious of the land deals being made by Fred Eaton, who Austin believed gave the appearance of being involved with the federal Bureau of Reclamation, which was considering an irrigation project in the Owens Valley. When it turned out that Eaton (a former mayor of Los Angeles) was buying land and water rights that would become part of the Los Angeles Aqueduct, Stafford Austin wrote numerous letters to his bosses in the Interior Department, and other federal officials, including President Theodore Roosevelt, to expose what he felt were the deceitful actions of Los Angeles. Mary Austin also wrote letters to officials and other writers, and contributed numerous articles to newspapers and other publications that highlighted the controversy about the nature and timing of the land deals with other aspects of the aqueduct project.

Stafford and Mary were in the thick of the controversy surrounding the initial round of land purchases, and were critical of the plans for the massive, 233-mile-long aqueduct from the Owens Valley to Los Angeles. But, as Hoffman will discuss, once Mary Austin became a noted literary figure, and left Independence, her husband and family, her biographers "inadequately researched the parts played by the Austins" in the controversy.

As a researcher and writer whose work on the Owens Valley and Los Angeles has spanned nearly three decades, Hoffman has a wealth of knowledge about that particular topic, and he will share his insights in light of the 100th anniversary of the completion of the L.A. Aqueduct.

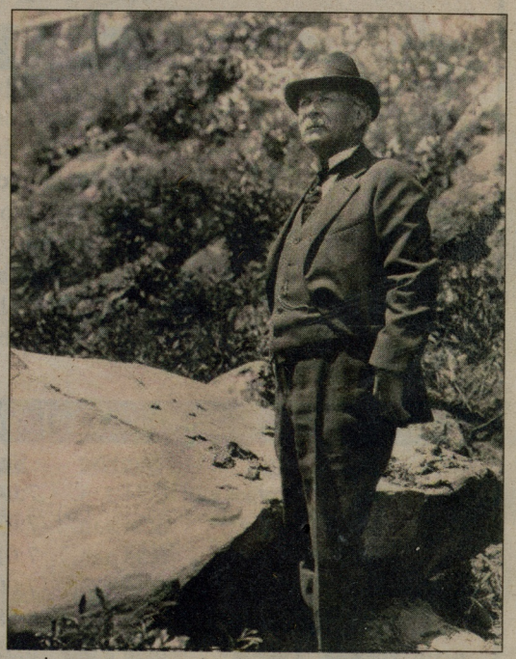
While living in Independence, Mary Austin and her husband, Stafford, were among the first local residents to become suspicious of mass land purchases by a former L.A. official who led many to believe he was working on behalf of the Federal Bureau of Reclamation. Photo courtesy Eastern California Museum

AUTHOR

Continued from front page

Hoffman will also focus on the public pageant that marked the completion of the project, which he discusses in "Dedicating the Aqueduct: Los Angeles Celebrates the Arrival of Owens River Water, Nov. 5, 1913." That day was when about 30,000 people watched Owens River water pour down The Cascades and officially arrive in Los Angeles. That day also featured the most famous five words ever uttered by William Mulholland, chief engineer of the Aqueduct Project. "There it is – take it," he said when the water came streaming down the concrete channel.

Dr. Hoffman has been writing scholarly and popular articles since the early 1970s about the water issues that have intertwined the histories of the Owens Valley and Los Angeles. One of his more recent works is "Mary and Stafford Austin, and the Owens Valley," published in the *Journal of the Southwest*. His award-winning book, "Vision and Villainy: Origins of the Owens Valley – Los Angeles Water Controversy," is a standard work for those interested in the water history of the Owens Valley. His newest book, "Mono Lake: From Dead Sea to Environmental Treasure," will be published in 2014. Hoffman teaches history at Los Angeles Valley College.



Inyo and Mono residents have an opportunity to hear what a conservation between Mary Austin (left) and William Mullholland may have sounded like in the early 1900s, when both historical figures were living or working in the Owens Valley. Both renowned figures had a reputable knowledge-base and probably opposing views. Photos courtesy Eastern California Museum 9-12-2013

One of history's 'What Ifs?'

If Mary Austin and William Mullholland had a conversation about water ...

By Jon Klusmire
Special to The Inyo Register

History is full of "what ifs."

What if the South had won the Battle of Gettysburg?

What if the U.S. had adopted Socialism during the Great Depression?

Closer to home, what if Owens Valley pioneers had cut a road over the Sierra to the West Side?

What if the Los Angeles Aqueduct had never been built?

While all those topics present the opportunity for tantalizing speculations, Eastern Sierra residents will have one "what if" answered this week.

"What if famed environmental author Mary Austin had a chance meeting with City of Los Angeles water boss William Mulholland and they had a lively discussion about what, even in the early 1900s, was known as the Owens Valley and Los Angeles Aqueduct controversy?"

Bringing that historical fiction to life will be history professors Judy Nolte Temple and Chris Smith, who will don the appropriate period clothes and the proper staunch attitudes of Austin and Mulholland, and engage in a verbal water war.

The pair will bring the passion of their respective characters to the Mammoth Lakes Library at 6:30 p.m. today, and then repeat the living history performance on Saturday, Sept. 14, in the Independence Legion Hall, in Independence. Both events are free and open to the public, and are part of the ongoing programs marking the 100th anniversary of the opening of the L.A. Aqueduct. Sponsoring "A Night with Mary and Bill: Conversations Between Mary Austin and William Mulholland," are the Mammoth Lakes

See WHAT IF, page 5

Judy Temple (l) will act as Author Mary Austin while Chris Smith takes on the role as LADWP boss William Mullholland during a discussion and performance in Mammoth Lakes today and in Independence on Saturday. Photos courtesy Eastern California Museum

WHAT IF

Continued from front page

Library, the Eastern California Museum and the Metabolic Studio.

Austin and Mulholland became larger-than-life figures in their respective fields in the first half of the 20th century.

Austin was a noted literary figure, thanks to her fictional depictions of the land and people in the American Southwest. That work included books and plays that reflected her enchantment with the land, the environment, and the people, from sheep herders to Native Americans, who lived in harmony with that environment. Her style, choice of topics and sheer output made her unique at the time. She has since been embraced as a feminist, an environmentalist, a naturalist and a writer whose works chronicled and enlivened the stories of California and the West.

Mulholland was the man who managed what in 1908 was one of the largest construction projects undertaken in the U.S.: building the gravity-fed Los Angeles Aqueduct, which stretches for 233 miles from the Owens Valley to Los Angeles. Mulholland, a self-taught engineer, was head of the Los Angeles Water Department, and under his guiding hand, the massive, complex, $24 million project was completed on time and on budget, in 1913. After that feat, he became the head of the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power, and helped secure water and electricity for the city, and also built the infrastructure to deliver those essential ingredients that lead to Los Angeles becoming the largest city in the West.

Since Austin and Mulholland were in and around the Owens Valley at approximately the same time, the chances of them meeting each other and having a bit of a chat is not as far-fetched as some other historical "what ifs."

Mary Austin wrote her first successful book, "Land of Little Rain," while living in Independence. Her husband, Stafford, worked at the Federal Land Office in Independence, and in the period between 1904 and 1905, he was the first to publicly disclose that former L.A. Mayor Fred Eaton was allowing local residents to think he was working for the federal Reclamation Service, which was studying the feasibility of a federal dam and irrigation project in the Owens Valley. In reality, as Stafford Austin revealed, Eaton was buying options on land and water that would eventually be turned over to Los Angeles and form the foundation for the Aqueduct project.

Although Mulholland was not in the valley during the period of the controversial land purchases, he traveled through the area several times with Eaton, and of course was on scene during the aqueduct's construction.

In any case, both were deeply steeped in the facts, the assumptions and rumors, and the general chain of events, both aboveboard and slightly devious, which lead to Los Angeles owning enough land and water rights to go forward with the Aqueduct. And Austin and Mulholland were also more than well versed on the consequences and controversy surrounding the completion of the Aqueduct. Austin's book, "The Ford," is a fictionalized account of the entire episode, published in 1917.

Bringing those two characters to life are two unique historians and writers.

Chris Smith, Ph.D., is a recently retired associate professor of History at Arizona State University. He has written and lectured extensively about contemporary American culture and the West. He brings his lively speaking style and wit to the task of portraying William Mulholland, who could be a gruff, old-fashioned Irishman with a sharp tongue, or an eloquent defender of his life's work for the City of Los Angeles.

Judy Nolte Temple, Ph.D. is a professor of Woman's Studies and English at the University of Arizona. She has published two collections of essays about literature and culture of the American Southwest, and two books based on women's diaries, one about an Iowa pioneer farm wife, and one on Baby Doe Tabor, of Colorado gold mining fame. Temple was a Fulbright Scholar to New Zealand in 2003. Temple said he fell in love with Mary Austin during a trip to the Eastern Sierra in the late 1990s. Unlike Austin, she said she has not learned to catch trout with her hands, but loves to fish and camp in the area.

For more information or directions, call the Mammoth Library at 760-934-8670, or the Eastern California Museum, at (760) 878-0258.

Mulholland's long shadow

11-3-2013

His L.A. Aqueduct changed the city — and water politics — forever.

By William Kahrl

ONE HUNDRED YEARS after its opening, the Los Angeles Aqueduct continues to cast a long shadow over the rough and tumble of California water policy. The arrival of water from the Owens Valley made the modern city possible. But it also reshaped Los Angeles to suit its capabilities and changed water politics forever.

The aqueduct was not designed to bring water to Los Angeles but rather to the arid wasteland of the San Fernando Valley, which then lay outside the city limits. This would vastly enrich the lands owned by a small band of prominent industrialists who were promoting the aqueduct. To prevent this group from profiting from the public project, President Theodore Roosevelt prohibited Los Angeles from selling any of the Owens Valley water outside the city limits. Los Angeles promptly resolved that difficulty by annexing the San Fernando Valley, thereby cementing an often fractious relationship between the two communities.

Exclusive access to the aqueduct has given Los Angeles a much purer and less costly water supply than its neighbors, who must rely on supplies drawn from saltier sources that require much more expensive treatment. Through the creation of the Metropolitan Water District, Los Angeles today has access to much more water than it needs. But its continued reliance on the superior supplies from the Owens Valley means that the water Los Angeles hasn't used from the water district has been available to support the development of Orange County and San Diego.

The city originally frightened voters into supporting the aqueduct by fabricating a drought scare. But in the 1920s, a real drought descended that scared the city into two fateful decisions. First, worried that the aqueduct couldn't meet its needs, Los Angeles shouldered aside San Diego's plans to tap the Colorado River and took over that project for itself. That may help to explain San Diego's abiding resentment of all things Angeleno, its persistent opposition to water planning that might benefit the city and its often fruitless quest for an "independent" water supply of its own, no matter what the cost.

Second, to ensure that it was getting all the water the aqueduct could convey, Los Angeles determined to strangle agricultural water use in the Owens Valley. This prompted the valley's armed resistance. The aqueduct was repeatedly blown up, and at one point, it was seized by the embattled farmers, who shut it down entirely.

Los Angeles ultimately won that conflict. The Owens Valley economy was devastated and the city wound up owning most of the area, which it attempted to run as a virtual colony. For half a century, investments in valley business were actively discouraged. Agriculture was briefly revived to supply a federal internment camp for Japanese Americans during World War II. But Los Angeles ripped out the orchards and plowed up the vegetable patches as soon as the internees were released.

When a company set up a plant to extract valuable chemicals in the dry bed of Owens Lake, the city waited until the plant was ready to open and then flooded it out. And as recently as 35 years ago, a valley radio station that dared to criticize the city was forced to fire its reporters when Los Angeles threatened to shut down its broadcasting tower.

The suffering of the Owens Valley in Los Angeles' hands rewrote California's water law. State statutes now ensure that the areas of origin can never again be stripped of their water resources for the sake of development elsewhere. Without those guarantees — and the federal government's promise to respect them — approval could never have been secured for California's much larger modern water systems, the Central Valley Project and the State Water Project.

And the efforts of state and federal water planners today to ensure that these systems will continue to meet the needs of two-thirds of California's people through the implementation of the proposed Bay Delta Conservation Plan likewise rely on the assurance that the rights of Northern California water users will be protected.

Opponents of modern water planning often evoke the bad example of Owens Valley. But the Los Angeles Aqueduct has a much more relevant role to play in these debates. Los Angeles, after all, has withdrawn its heavy hand in recent years. Town properties have been returned to private ownership. Water withdrawals from Mono Lake have been reduced, and stretches of the Owens River have been restored. The city is even putting water back into Owens Lake to cut down on dust.

These concessions have drawn applause from some environmental advocates. But such kindness isn't cost-free. The less water Los Angeles takes from the Owens Valley, the more it needs from someplace else. This has inevitably increased pressure on the supplies the Metropolitan Water District draws from the Sacramento-San Joaquin River Delta, which is what the current water policy debate over the Bay Delta Conservation Plan is trying to resolve.

The opening of the aqueduct inspired water planners throughout the Western states as a demonstration of the public benefits that a healthful and reliable water supply can deliver. Its continuing operation today serves as a constant reminder that we live in a hydraulic society. Our water needs and our prosperity are linked. The old north-south rivalries that once divided Californians don't play so well to a more sophisticated society that better understands these interconnections, and that Oakland won't benefit from denying water to Glendale.

Rob A Pearce -

11-12-2013

Roland:

Here is the document Enid gave me that I told you about. My Grandfather thought the world of her and when in High School I did a paper on the water issues. My grandfather took me to meet her at that time - She spent a lot of time talking to me.

Great to meet you the other day.

Rob

from the file of Enid A. Larson

TWO SIDES TO EVERY QUESTION

On account of the tirade of abuse and vilification to which we have been subjected because of our opposition to the Irrigation District, we think that a statement of the reasons for our attitude will not be out of place.

Under the most favorable conditions it would be difficult to carry on an Irrigation District in Owens Valley because of the high cost of administration. See the expenses already incurred and remember that this is only a beginning. No water or property acquired and no ditch assessments paid by the District.

Under our present system of irrigation (probably the cheapest in the whole state of California), most of our farmers are going behind.

The main argument advanced by the District enthusiasts was that it would protect the valley against the encroachments of the City of Los Angeles. No idea could be more misleading. We would like to impress the following facts upon all who may read this article, particularly the residents of the town of Bishop. THE IRRIGATION DISTRICT WILL NOT PROTECT ANYTHING BUT, IF ALLOWED TO CONTINUE, IT WILL EVENTUALLY RUIN ALL OUR FARMERS NOT ALREADY BANKRUPT. Many of our farms are now so heavily encumbered that the interest on the mortgage greatly exceeds the cash rental value.

Suppose the District were properly functioning and Los Angeles wanted to acquire more water, how would it be likely to proceed? It would buy more land and shut off the water, would it not? And where would the water go? Why down hill naturally—into the river and aqueduct. Where else could it go? Some of our District enthusiasts answer: "Why it would be used somewhere else in the District." But there would be no "somewhere else" in the District because that "somewhere else" would have been bought up by the city, and naturally the farmers would not ruin their good land by swamping it.

Mr. James F. Peck, a well known water attorney employed by the Protective Association, recommended the formation of a holding corporation instead of an Irrigation District. Had his advice been acted on, Mr. Peck's fee of $10,000 would have been a cheap investment. But other counsels prevailed.

We wish to add a few words regarding options to purchase the water stock taken by the District and proposed purchase of the same. The California Joint Stock Land Bank of San Francisco has loaned several hundred thousand dollars to farmers in the District. Within the past thirty days this Bank has sent counterparts of the following letter to its debtors:

December 22, 1923.

"Mr. _____

_____, California.

Dear Sir:

It has come to our attention that you either have or are about to sell to the Owens Valley Irrigation District, your stock in the Bishop Creek Ditch Company, which stock we hold under pledge as a part of the security in connection with your mortgage to us for $_____.

As this water stock represents a right which for practical purposes is appurtenant to the land described in your mortgage, and as your attempt of sale would threaten the severance of this water right from the land, we feel seriously concerned about the matter, and in our opinion the accomplishment of such a severance would materially depreciate the value of our security.

As you are aware, the mortgage provides that in case the security is jeopardized, or its value threatened, we may declare the whole debt immediately due, the mortgage making us the sole judge in this matter. We would regret to be compelled to take this course, but it may be that if such a proposed sale be carried out by you that we would be compelled to do so for our own protection.

We would thank you to advise us promptly what are the real facts in the case.

Yours very truly,

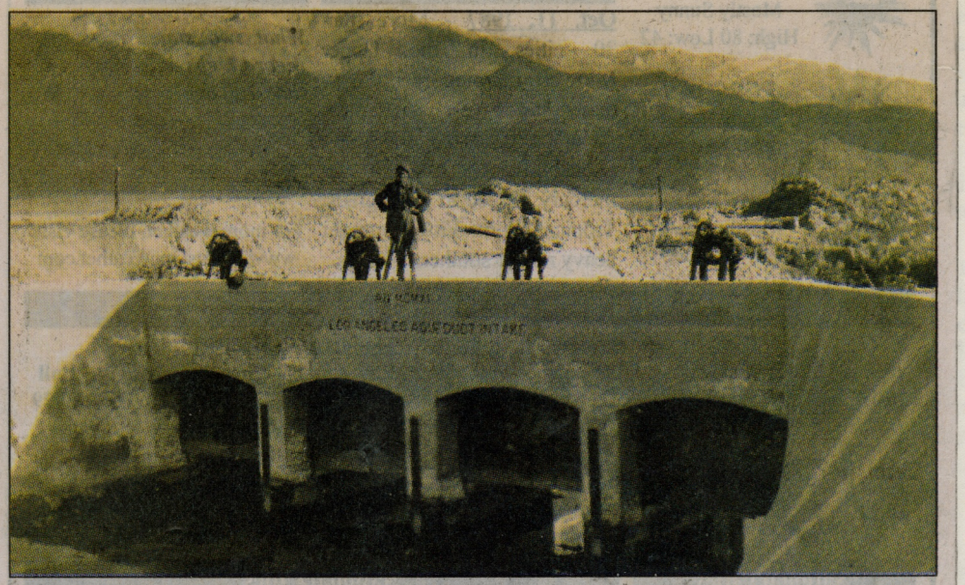
A. W. HENDRICK, Vice-President."

If the proposed sale of $736,000 worth of District Bonds goes through, it means that an additional lien for the pro rata of this amount will be placed upon every ranch in the District (with more disastrous contingencies in the background.) This means depreciation of the security and will furnish just as good grounds for foreclosure before maturity as an option of water stock.

We have been called traitors for negotiating and recommending an agreement with the City of Los Angeles which is now generally conceded to have been most favorable to the Valley,—infinitely more so than one recently recommended by the Irrigation District Directors. We have been called traitors for fighting for the water rights of all the settlers when the same were encroached upon in Long Valley. We were called traitors when we opposed the suit instigated by the so-called Protective Association to enjoin the construction of a dam in Long Valley, a project which would have solved the problem of furnishing an adequate water supply at all times for every acre of irrigated land within the District. We are again called traitors for opposing a plan which means the confiscation of our property and that of our neighbors.

We submit there are two sides to every question.

GEO. WATTERSON,
WM. SYMONS.



Nearly 100 years after its completion in 1913, Bishop residents are working with students from Cal Poly Pomona to begin organizing a centennial celebration of the Los Angeles Aqueduct (above). Photo courtesy Eastern California Museum

10-11-2012

L.A. Aqueduct in spotlight

Audio tour release, documentary screening and kick-off of architecture project planned

By Mike Gervais
Register Staff

10-11-2012

Regardless of how residents feel about the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power's activities in the Owens Valley, preparations are being made to celebrate the completion of the Los Angeles Aqueduct nearly 100 years ago.

Over the course of its century-long history, the 419-mile aqueduct has been contested as an environmental detriment, illegally diverted and even blown up, but it's also been heralded as one of the greatest engineering feats of its time.

And that's essentially what local and out-of-town residents will be recognizing this weekend when students from Cal Poly Pomona team up with residents, the LADWP and others to begin work on a centennial project.

Cal Poly students are planning to shed light on the construction, benefits and impacts the pipeline has had on the Owens Valley and L.A. as well as all parts in between.

Construction on the aqueduct began in 1908 with a budget of $24.5 million. With 5,000 workers employed for its construction, the L.A. Aqueduct was completed Nov. 5, 1913.

The aqueduct consists of 223 miles of 12-foot diameter steel pipe, 120 miles of railroad track, two hydroelectric plants, 170 miles of power lines, 240 miles of telephone line, a cement plant and 500 miles of roads.

The aqueduct uses gravity alone to move water and also uses the water to generate electricity, making it cost-efficient to operate.

For the centennial celebration of the completion of the aqueduct, Cal Poly Pomona's Aqueduct Centennial Project, also known as the Aqueduct Futures Project, will explore future scenarios for California's water infrastructure, cultural and ecological impacts and methods that can be implemented to conserve and reduce water use in Los Angeles.

The Aqueduct Futures Project is bringing together students and faculty from Cal Poly Pomona's Landscape Architecture, Computer Science, Urban and Regional Planning, Graphic Design, Geography, Geology/Hydrology, Regenerative Studies and Education departments to collectively create public exhibitions, a website and events to raise awareness about the future of water in California.

In all, between 160 and 200 students will be participating in the Aqueduct Futures Project.

The program kicks off this fall with Cal Poly classes that will focus on generating concepts for cultural uses of the aqueduct and envisioning "green" infrastructure for supplying water to L.A. in the future.

"These designs will be represented through drawings, maps, renderings, models, text and other media," Assistant Professor of Landscape Architecture at Cal Poly Pomona Barry

See AQUEDUCT, page A-3

AQUEDUCT

Continued from front page

Lehrman said in a press release. "The exhibition design and development of the interactive digital installation will be initiated in the winter of 2013, and continue during courses in the spring. A team of students will execute the final fabrication and refinement of the digital exhibition over the summer of 2013 for fall installation."

The exhibit is scheduled to roll out before the Nov. 5, 2013 100-year anniversary of the aqueduct's completion.

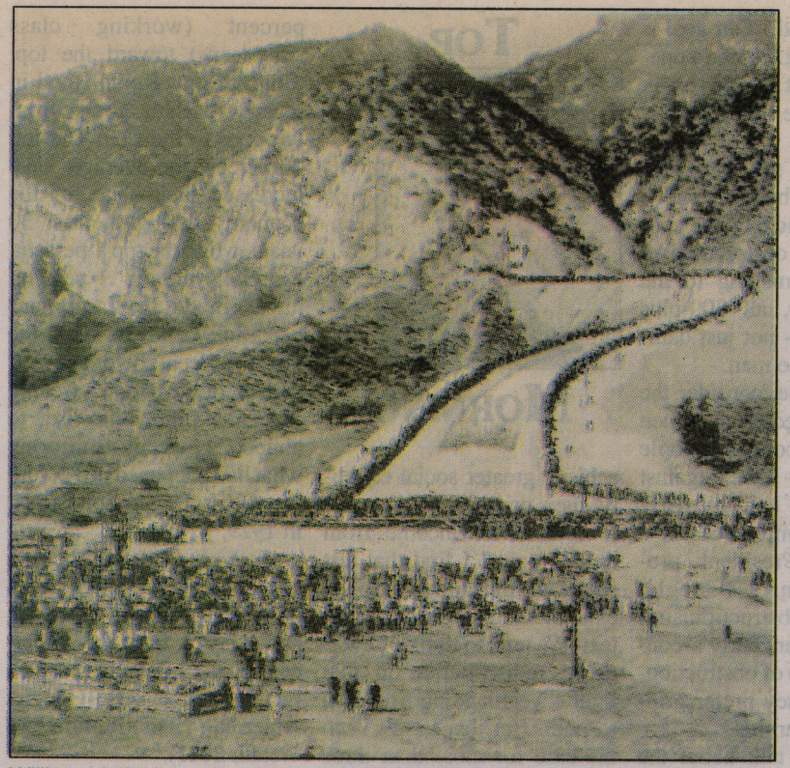
In addition to the digital material, the Aqueduct Futures exhibition will include a kiosk with interactive graphics and real-time and historical data regarding the flow of the aqueduct, information panels with drawings, maps and photos of the history of the aqueduct, a model of the aqueduct and artifacts relating to its construction.

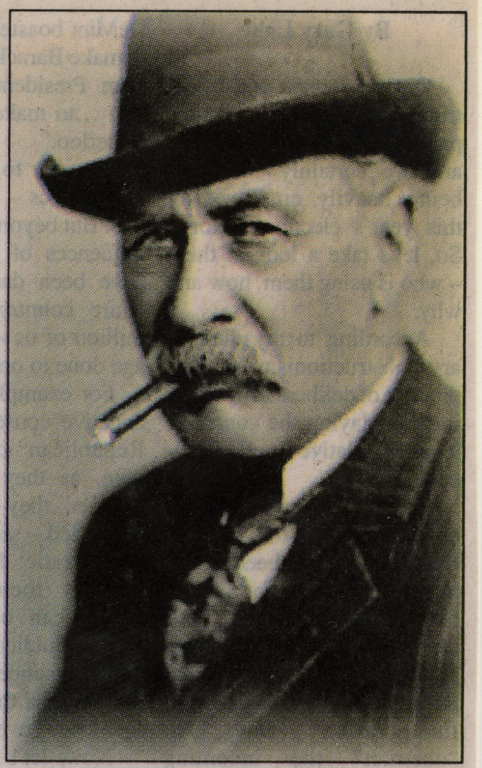
Currently, venues for the exhibition that are being considered include the Interagency Visitor's Center in Lone Pine, the Los Angeles Municipal Art Gallery and the Autry National Center of the American West.

Students with the Aqueduct Futures Project will be leading a Community Workshop and Resource Fair from 6-8 p.m. Monday, Oct. 15 in the Bishop Methodist Center, 205 N. Fowler St., to get Owens Valley residents involved in the design process of a large-scale sustainable infrastructure system for the Aqueduct Futures Project.

The group will also be meeting with representatives from the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power to tour portions of the aqueduct while they are in the area.

"One-hundred years ago at the opening of the Los Angeles Aqueduct, William Mulholland said, 'There it is, take it,'" Lehrman said. "It is now time to 'give back' to the Owens Valley. The Los Angeles Aqueduct was designed over one hundred years ago to just supply water and power. However, infrastructure in the 21st Century needs to provide cultural and ecological uses too."





William Mullholland (far right), the chief engineer and superintendent of what was then known as the Los Angeles Bureau of Water Works and Supply (now LADWP), delivered the now legendary statement, "There it is – take it," at the opening of the Los Angeles Aqueduct in 1913 (above left). Photo at left courtesy Los Angeles Unified School District/photo at right from file

"Many people in Southern California take water for granted," said Michael Woo, dean of Cal Poly Pomona's College of Environmental Design. "Professor Lehrman's project commemorating the 100th anniversary of the Los Angeles Aqueduct reflects our University's commitment to educating future environmental design professionals and the general public about the fact that life as we know it in Southern California would be impossible without access to water."

To RSVP for the event or more information, visit www.OwensValleyFutures.eventbright.com.

At 7 p.m. Sunday in the Owens Valley School gym, the group will also be celebrating the release of a self-guided car audio tour program through the Owens Valley that examines the controversial social, political and environmental history of the aqueduct.

The event includes a panel discussion that includes Owens Valley Committee Executive Director Mark Bagley; environmental activist Mike Prather; Inyo County Librarian and community activist Nancy Masters and Bishop Paiute Tribal member and environmental activist Harry Williams, who all participated in interviews for the audio tour.

The OVC, which will be participating in the Resource Fair, is also planning its own informational meeting about the aqueduct.

The OVC will be screening a documentary on the aqueduct and the impact it has had on the environment at 7 p.m. Wednesday, Oct. 17 at the White Mountain Research Station, 3000 E. Line St. in Bishop.

The group will be screening two parts of a three-part documentary that was included in the 2009 DVD release of the Academy Award-winning 1974 film "Chinatown."

Executive Director Bagley said that the meeting is not a part of the aqueduct's centennial celebration, and is an effort by the group to raise awareness about its activities.

The free two-part documentary runs about 55 minutes and all are invited to attend.

"Aqueduct Futures Project": Ambitious Undertaking by Cal Poly Pomona Students

By Christina Reed, The Hired Pen

10-25-2012 "The Sierra Reader"

Eastern Sierra, CA--Ambitious, thought-provoking, and far-reaching: the "Aqueduct Futures Project," headed up by Barry Lehrman, Assistant Professor in the Department of Landscape Architecture at California Polytechnic University at Pomona, and 62 students, picked-up their research notebooks last week in Bishop. Their notes included first-hand reflections on the Owens Valley from many interested residents, the Owens Valley Committee, and county, state and federal agency members. The students' and prof's goals: look into the future of the Owens Valley, with a long-running eye on the ever-present story of the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power's Aqueduct, and its affects on the landscape.

Lehrman says he was "haunted by this [Owens Valley and the Eastern Sierra] place," and as a part of his landscape architectural interests and advanced studies, he created a "Master Plan for the Owens Valley" in 2006. Fast-forward to his students in the advanced levels of architectural landscape at Cal Poly Pomona, and you have the ingredients for this big look at the"infrastructure" of water and landscape, and the locally-held workshop to gather beta/data.

Participants grouped around maps of the Owens Valley, and Lehrman and students alike asked residents to ponder on topics such as: what is unique about the Owens Valley, what is your favorite place in the Owens Valley, how would it feel to lose your favorite place, what do potential futures of the Owens Valley look like?

Students and residents took up colored markers and stickers, put their heads down to look at the maps, and began storytelling answers that highlighted favorite places to camp, hike, climb, relax, meditate, and recreate. Each map telling a different story about the interests of that group of people, and each map detailing concerns.

The sharing-out of this group work culminated in looking at the map commons and map uncommons, and it will be up to the students and Lehrman to distill this interesting and valuable people-data. Eventually, Lehrman says the project's objectives will include local classrooms using the findings in a kindergarden-twelfth grade curriculum. Lehrman hopes to explore what makes up the Owens Valley landscapes, what makes this region adaptable and sustainable, with journeys through our cultural and ecological landscapes too.

Visit www.aqueductfutures.com or aqueduct@csupomona.edu for more about this ongoing research/story. Funding for parts of the research underway was provided by Metabolic Studio.

Cal Poly celebrates aqueduct anniversary

Landscape design students seek citizen input on project

Register Staff

One hundred years after the completion of the Los Angeles Aqueduct, a team of four graduate landscape architecture students from Cal Poly Pomona is creating a vision for the next century of the Eastern Sierra.

In February, the students will hold two public workshops for the community to participate in the design process by sharing ideas about issues including priorities for local economic development, water rights and usage, and recreation.

The first workshop will be held from 3-5 p.m. Saturday, Feb. 16 at Statham Hall in Lone Pine. The second workshop will be held from 3-5 p.m. Sunday, Feb. 17 at the June Lake Community Center.

The workshops are being hosted by Cal Poly Pomona students Tiernan Doyle, Eric Haley, James Powell and Devon Santy, who are enrolled in the 606 Studio as their capstone experience in the master of landscape architecture program. They are investigating the entire watershed supplying the Los Angeles Aqueduct to develop a comprehensive regional plan that addresses ecology, cultural uses and the water supply as part of the Cal Poly Pomona Aqueduct Futures Project. The purpose of the 606 Studio is to give graduating students a final learn-by-doing, large-scale planning and regional design project in collaboration with local communities.

According to a press release issued by Cal Poly, "the beauty of the Eastern Sierra" motivated the graduate students to preserve the open spaces created when the City of Los Angeles purchased most of the Owens Valley land and water rights a century ago.

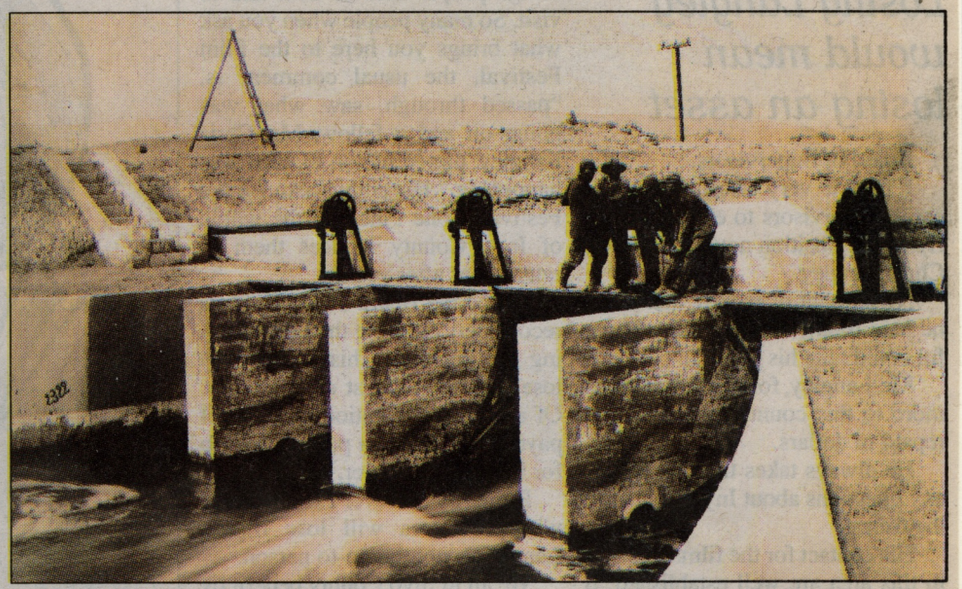
"The breathtaking water systems at play in the Eastern Sierra, with the interaction of human and ecological water uses, present the sort of complex challenge that inspired me to study landscape architecture," Doyle said.

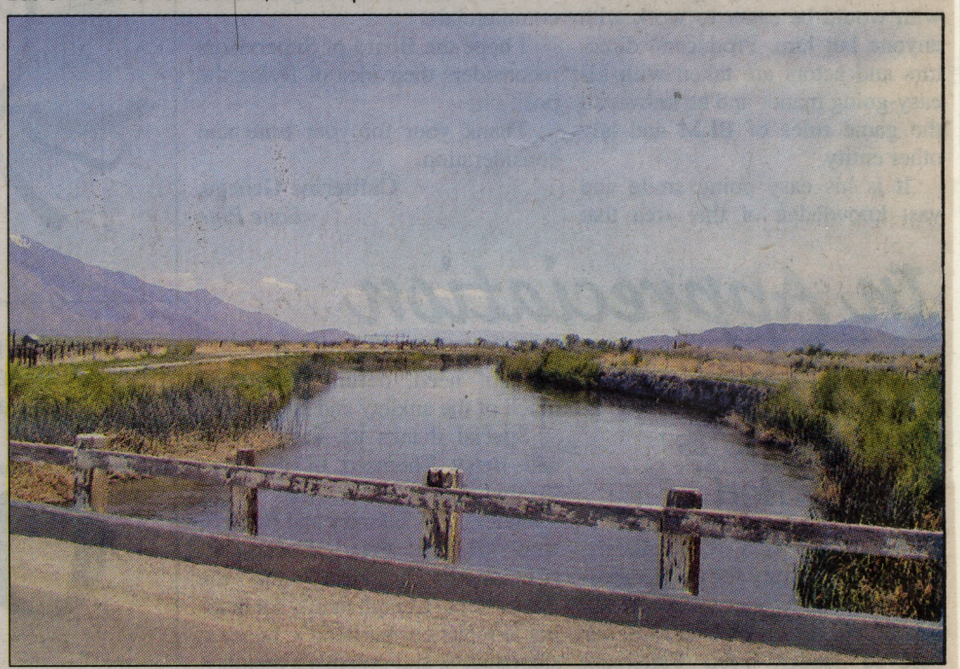
Santy said he fell in love with the area as a geology student in the summer of 2007, "and now we have the opportunity to improve how the region functions. The community workshops will help us identify innovative new approaches to long-contested issues."

Assistant Professor Barry Lehrman is the director of the Aqueduct Futures Project at Cal Poly Pomona and lead advisor for the 606 Aqueduct Project team. In addition, the Aqueduct Futures Project is offering a series of interdisciplinary courses taught by faculty from landscape architecture, graphic design and computer science this academic year. Undergraduate students enrolled in the Aqueduct Futures courses are developing a website and exhibition about the impacts and future of the Los Angeles Aqueduct for its centennial on Nov. 5.

Sixty-six undergraduate students and 32 residents from eastern California participated in the first Aqueduct Futures workshop in Bishop on Oct. 15. The workshop identified many unique places around the Owens Valley. The students then spent the rest of the course designing places along the aqueduct that would benefit the community and nature.

All residents of the Owens Valley and Mono Basin areas are invited to attend the free workshops.





With the 100-year anniversary of the Los Angeles Aqueduct coming up in November, a group of landscape archetecture students from Cal Poly Pomona are planning local workshops to help them design projects along the current route of the aqueduct (below). Top photo courtesy Eastern California Museum/bottom photo from files

For more information about the events and the project, email: aqueduct@csupomona.edu or visit: www.aqueductfutures.wordpress.com/events-calendar.

VOL. 143, ISSUE 9 TUESDAY

In celebration of the 100-year anniversary of the completion of what officials call a 200-plus mile "engineering marvel," L.A. has declared 2013 to be "The Year of the Aqueduct." Above, construction crews work on the aqueduct in the Cottonwood Creek area between Olancha and Lone Pine about 100 years ago. Photo courtesy Eastern California Museum/County of Inyo

L.A. City Council declares 2013 'Year of the Aqueduct'

1-22-2013

Events, exhibits locally and in Southern California will be recognizing completion of 'engineering marvel'

By Mike Gervais
Register Staff

Statewide this year, residents, organizations and public entities are recognizing the 100-year anniversary of the completion of the Los Angeles Aqueduct, the engineering feat that transports the Owens Valley's water to Los Angeles.

In addition to a number of projects and events taking place locally, City of L.A. leaders have declared 2013 "The Year of the Los Angeles Aqueduct."

The declaration came in the form of a Proclamation approved by the L.A. City Council last Friday. It was presented by Councilmember Jose Huizar along with Councilmember Tom LaBonge.

Construction on the aqueduct began in 1908 with a budget of $24.5 million. With 5,000 workers employed for its construction, the L.A. Aqueduct was completed Nov. 5, 1913.

The aqueduct consists of 223 miles of 12-foot diameter steel pipe, 120 miles of railroad track, two hydroelectric plants, 170 miles of power lines, 240 miles of telephone line, a cement plant and 500 miles of roads.

Over the course of its century-long history, the now 419-mile aqueduct has been contested as an environmental detriment, illegally diverted and even blown up, but it's also been heralded as one of the greatest engineering feats of its time.

Today, the L.A. Aqueduct still provides about half of the water needed for the city's 4 million residents.

The L.A. City Council's declaration calls the completion of the L.A. Aqueduct 100 years ago "a significant historical event that led to the growth and prosperity of Los Angeles and Southern California, helped spur an economy that today rivals many nations' and supports a distinct culture synonymous with invention, creativity and entrepreneurship."

"The Los Angeles Aqueduct is a critical reason the City of Los Angeles was able to expand from a sparsely populated region to the second-largest city in the United States and a thriving metropolis,"

See AQUEDUCT, page 5

AQUEDUCT

Continued from front page

said Councilmember Huizar, Energy and the Environment Committee chair. "The L.A. Aqueduct's importance continues to this day and the City of Los Angeles is proud to recognize this engineering marvel."

Locally, the Eastern California Museum, Inyo County Board of Supervisors and residents in the private sector are finding their own ways to commemorate the anniversary of the aqueduct's museum.

Eastern California Museum in Independence will be presenting an aqueduct photo exhibit from March to the end of the year.

The exhibit will tell the story of the construction of the 200-plus mile project.

According to Museum Director Jon Klusmire, many of the photos included in the exhibit will be displayed publicly for the first time.

The museum is also celebrating the completion of the Aqueduct by dedicating its 2013 calendar to the project. The calendar features more than a dozen historic photos of the aqueduct's construction.

U.C. Berkeley's Jenna Cavelle, who is currently living in Bishop, has been working on her documentary, "PAYA: The Untold Story of the L.A.-Owens Valley Water War" for the past year-and-a-half, and is hoping to make it available to the public later this year.

Rather than focusing on the aqueduct, Cavelle said her project aims to go back even farther, telling the story of the Owens Valley's indigenous people and how they utilized the Eastern Sierra runoff before white settlers came to the area, and how the construction of the aqueduct impacted their way of life.

Students from Cal Poly Pomona teamed up with residents, the LADWP and others last October to begin work on a centennial project that they say will shed light on the construction, benefits and impacts the pipeline has had on the Owens Valley and Los Angeles as well as all parts in between.

An exhibit telling the aqueduct story is scheduled to roll out before the Nov. 5 anniversary of the aqueduct's completion.

"The story of Los Angeles is the story of water, and Angelenos will keep on writing it for centuries to come, thanks to this aqueduct," Councilmember LaBonge said Friday. "The entirely gravity-fed Los Angeles Aqueduct remains one of the engineering marvels of modern times, and to this day continues to supply water through effective and responsible management by the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power."

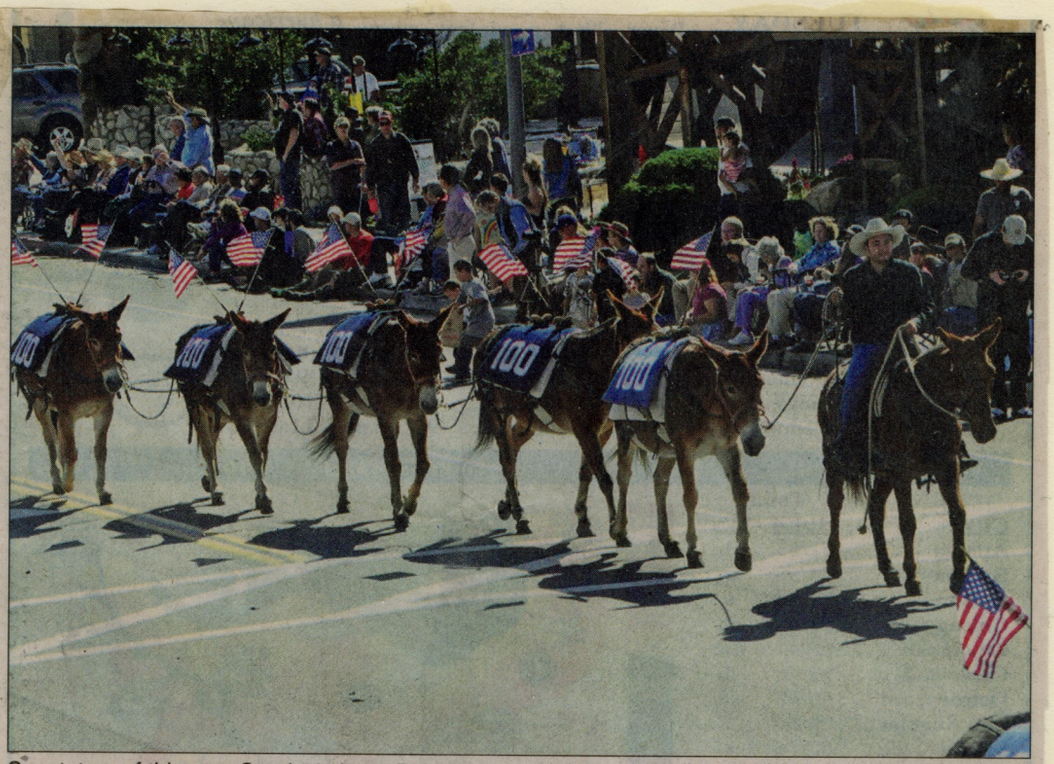
James B. McDaniel, senior assistant general manager of the LADWP Water System, was in attendance when the council considered the proclamation to unveil the Department's plans for the Centennial celebration, called "L.A. Aqueduct Centennial: Our Legacy, Our Future," and to describe the events, activities and public awareness campaign planned for the year.

"The enduring legacy of the Los Angeles Aqueduct is a source of immense pride at LADWP, and its stewardship is what we do unfailingly each and every day," he said. "On behalf of the men and women who help operate a system that supplies 600 million gallons of drinking water a day, and the countless others who built the aqueduct or worked for the Water System in the last century, we thank the Mayor and Council for its recognition and appreciation."

Also on hand was Christine Mulholland, great-granddaughter of aqueduct engineer William Mulholland.

"Few times in the history of Los Angeles has there been such a reason to celebrate the feats and accomplishments of our ancestors. That the Los Angeles Aqueduct, one of the modern wonders of the world of engineering, continues to bring fresh, clean water to the people of L.A. is a tribute to my great-grandfather, William Mulholland, and all the people who built, and now continue to maintain, the system," she said.

The Los Angeles Aqueduct Centennial will include special activities and events, a public awareness campaign and a celebration on Nov. 5 to mark 100 years to the day when a crowd of 40,000 gathered at the northeast end of the San Fernando Valley to witness the first flow of water down the Cascades and to hear Mulholland's immortal words: "There it is. Take it."



Spectators of this past Sunday's Lone Pine Film Festival parade got a sneak preview of the Metabolic Studio's "100 Mules Walking the Los Angeles Aqueduct" performance art piece. History in the making, the pack train of 100 mules begins its 240-mile journey south tomorrow, Oct. 18. Photo by Melany Lucia

10-17-2013

'100 Mules' head out Friday en route to Los Angeles

Independence and Lone Pine host events as historic pack train begins following aqueduct's 240-mile path

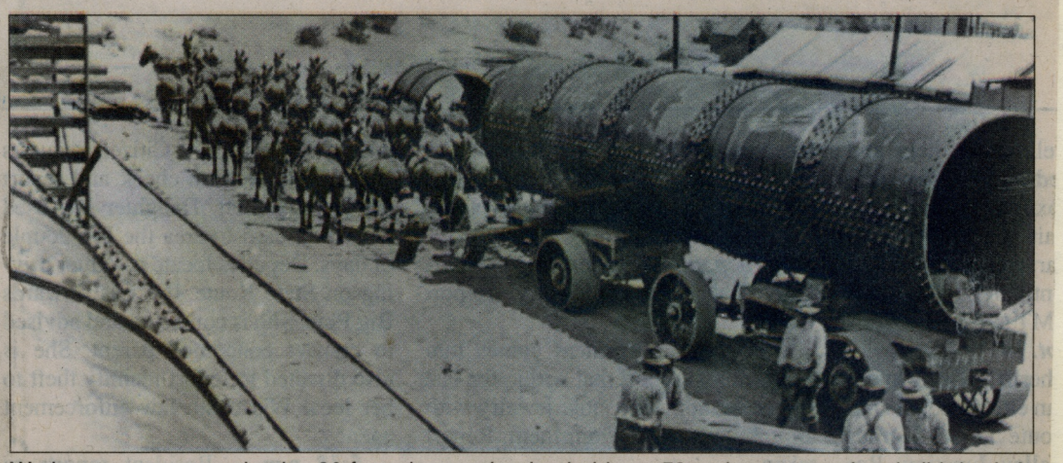
By Jon Klusmire
Special to The Inyo Register

One hundred mules will step out in formation on Friday, Oct. 18 to start a 240-mile journey alongside the Los Angeles Aqueduct that will take them from the Owens Valley to Los Angeles in about 27 days to commemorate the 100-year anniversary of the completion of the Aqueduct.

The first three days of the moving artistic and environmental statement being conducted by the Metabolic Studio will give Inyo County residents a chance to enjoy the sight of the massive mule parade moving across the landscape. The public is also invited to events and programs that will allow everyone to explore the Owens Valley's agricultural heritage, sample locally grown food and examine how the tenuous nature of the Colorado River watershed could affect Los Angeles, the Owens Valley and the West. Finally, a community celebration with food, music and fun will be geared to shining the spotlight on the stars of the show: the 100 mules who represent the equine workforce that helped build the Los Angeles Aqueduct.

"The Metabolic Studio will perform '100 Mules Walking the Los Angeles Aqueduct,' a commemorative artist action to connect Los Angeles to its water supply," noted a press release from the Metabolic Studio. "Many people in Los Angeles don't know their water comes from 240 miles away," added Lauren Bon, head of the Metabolic Studio and driving force behind the 100 Mule event.

Mules help build the Los Angeles Aqueduct in the early years of the last century, doing much of the heavy lifting (and pulling). Later this month, the role of the mule will be commemorated with a month-long trek from Lone Pine to L.A. via the aqueduct route. Photo courtesy Eastern California Museum



Workers prepare to unload a 36-foot pipe section hauled by a 52-mule team as they build the L.A. Aqueduct. In recognition of the 100th anniversary of the completion of the aqueduct, the Metabolic Studio is sponsoring the march of 100 mules from Inyo County to Los Angeles, along the length of the engineering marvel. Photo courtesy Eastern California Museum

100 MULES WALKING THE LOS ANGELES AQUEDUCT

On the centenary of the opening of the Los Angeles Aqueduct, Lauren Bon and the Metabolic Studio will perform, a commemorative artist action to connect Los Angeles to its water source. This performative parade of 100 mules will traverse the 240 miles of pipelines and canals that bring water from the Eastern Sierra through a gravity-fed system to Los Angeles, passing through three counties and nearly 50 communities along the way. Mule power shaped the modern West and was a primary force in constructing the aqueduct, an engineering feat that took only seven years to complete despite the rough terrain.

The parade will take nearly a month commencing at the Intake and will culminate in a Veterans Day Parade down Western Avenue in Glendale to welcome the mules into the City of Los Angeles on November 11, 2013, followed by a ceremony at the Equidome to celebrate our country's equine labor force—the mule. This commemorative action is a prelude to, *Bending the Los Angeles River Back into the City,* a work that will pierce the concrete jacket of the Los Angeles River and use a seventy-two foot waterwheel to reconnect the land to the river that originally supplied all the city's water.

One Hundred Mules Walking the Los Angeles Aqueduct is an action with a resolution to move forward into the next hundred years with renewed appreciation for this vital resource: Let it be resolved that the citizens of Los Angeles will do better at utilizing this life-giving resource in the next one hundred years!

This action is coordinated with the support of the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power (LADWP) that has itself been working to make a new century of water delivery happen.

http://anothercityispossible.com/home.html

By Brittany Levine

November 11, 2013, 3:27 p.m., Los Angeles Times

Jeff Lawson ran out the door Monday morning with his coffee cup in hand to see 100 mules take their final leg of a 240-mile journey.

Lawson was sleeping when his friend came knocking on his door at 7:45 a.m. with unusual news: There were mules stationed at nearby Brand Park.

Aqueduct: 100 Y

BY STACY CORLESS
PHOTOS COURTESY INYO COUNTY/EASTERN CALIFORNIA MUSEUM

BEYOND GEOLOGY, NO SINGLE PHENOMENON HAS INFLUENCED livelihoods and lifestyles in the Eastern Sierra more than the construction of the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power's aqueduct.

Just over one hundred years ago, the verdict came in from President Theodore Roosevelt himself. The aqueduct would be built, serving the needs of a growing city for the sacrifice of the few—the small towns and ranches that had sprung up thanks to irrigation from the Owens River.

Many have debated the social, economic and environmental effects of the draining of the Eastside's watershed.

The standard line from Bishop to Olancha, seen on local bumper stickers, holds that "LA sucks...the Owens Valley dry." That's a simplification of the incredibly compelling and heartbreaking story of LA's less-than-honest acquisition of valley lands in the early years of the twentieth century, most famously (and fictionally) interpreted in the film *Chinatown*.

Others say the aqueduct was a blessing in disguise that helped maintain the region's natural beauty and rural, lost-in-time feeling. After all, if it hadn't been for DWP employment, Dave McCoy might not have discovered the perfect snow conditions on Mammoth Mountain.

The Eastern California Museum in Independence currently features a small but powerful exhibit that chronicles the history of the aqueduct from the start of construction in 1908. The tale of this definitive battle is told through photographs and newspaper headlines.

It starts with a sight that no living inhabitant of the valley has seen: Owens Lake full of water. Back when Keeler and Cartago were lakefront hamlets, the region's mining economy was going strong and a ferry plied the lake's waters. This is what LA Department of Water and Power Chief and self-taught civil engineer William Mulholland saw when he first visited the valley in 1904.

In November 1908, one Owens Valley newspaper was already heralding the economic boom that road improvements would bring: "mountain travelers."

1908

In his colorful history of LA's search for water, *The Water Seekers,* Remi Nadeau details the incredible amount of infrastructure work that took place before actual aqueduct construction could commence: 240 miles of telephone lines, 500 miles of roads, 2300 buildings and tent houses powered by two hydroelectric plants.

Nadeau describes the "armies of transient labor," the so-called "blanket stiffs" that did the hard labor, some five thousand men on the job at a time, but rarely for more than two weeks at a time. "Through winter storms and summer heat the work went on—in round-the-clock, eight-hour shifts for the tunnels crews."

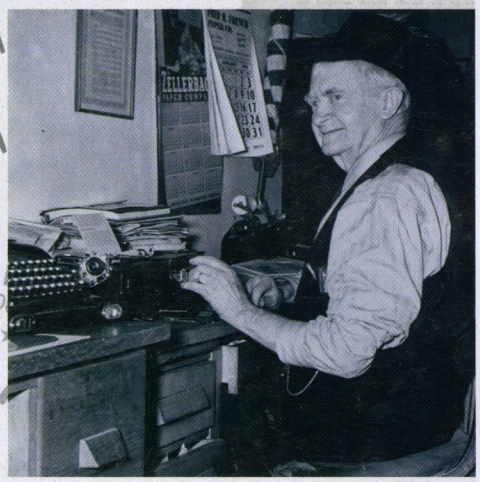
Years

1933

1920

The big ditch: by August 1908, the LA Daily Times reported that one mile of the aqueduct was completed.

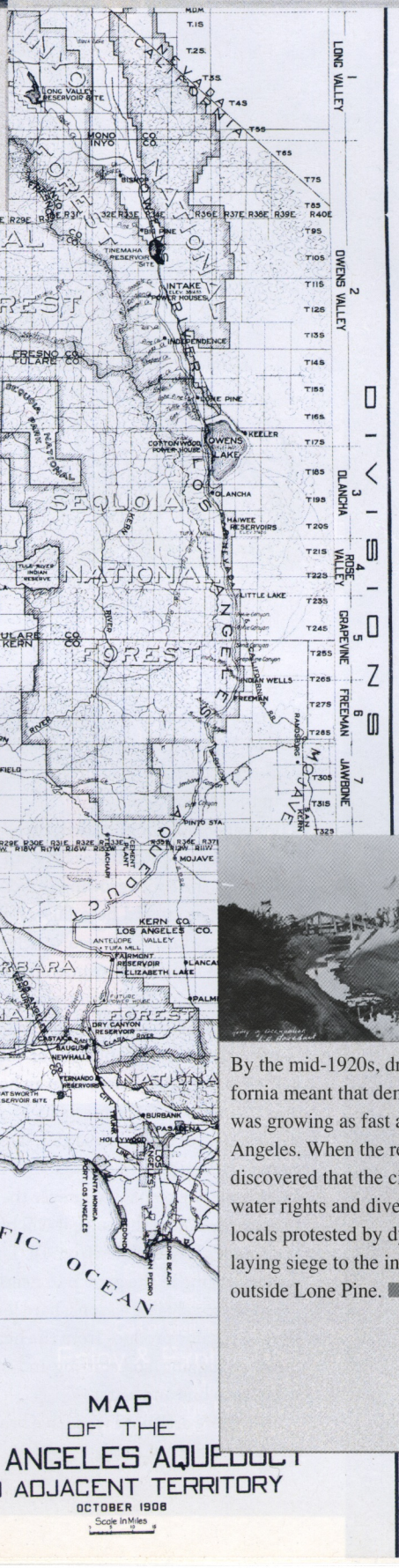
Although William Mulholland hatched his plan a few years earlier in the century, actual construction on the 223-mile aqueduct began exactly one-hundred years ago after Los Angeles residents passed a bond measure for $23,000,000 to start the project.



The valley's loudest voice decrying the aqueduct project was W.A. Chalfant, publisher of the Inyo Register. Chalfant's paper—along with his 1933 history of the water wars—accused LA and Mullholland of nothing less than murder:

"The dominant genius of the whole undertaking was William Mulholland, whose attitude was typified by his remark (here expurgated) that there were not enough trees in Owens Valley to hang its people on. It must be said of him that he is not open to charges of deception. To him the Inyo people were outlander enemies to be conquered; he left the methods to competent subordinates. The nominally controlling water board served as his rubber stamp, up to the time when the chickens of different engineering failures came home to roost at his doorstep, and when the tragedy of the San Francisquito dam sent out its flood to take hundreds of lives and to wash down to the clay feet of the city's almost deified idol."

—Chalfant, *The Story of Inyo*



By the mid-1920s, drought in Southern California meant that demand for Owens water was growing as fast as the population of Los Angeles. When the remaining valley farmers discovered that the city was buying up more water rights and diverting irrigation water, the locals protested by dynamiting siphons and laying siege to the intake at the Alabama Gates, outside Lone Pine. ■

Los Angeles Department of Water & Power

L.A. Aqueduct

Centennial 2013

Our Legacy. Our Future.

For a century, William Mulholland's great engineering achievement has brought water to Los Angeles from hundreds of miles away in the Owens Valley.

The dedication of the Los Angeles Aqueduct Cascades on November 5, 1913, marked one of the most significant events in the city's history and is forever linked to the growth and prosperity of Los Angeles and all of Southern California.

To learn more about the Aqueduct Centennial, our legacy and our future, please visit

www.laaqueduct100.com

Join the conversation on

www.facebook.com/LAsWaterFuture

#LAA100

Our Legacy

The Los Angeles Aqueduct achieved many world records during construction and, as an entirely gravity-fed water system, 100 years later remains one of the engineering marvels of the 20th century. Completion of the Los Angeles Aqueduct helped spur an economy that today rivals many nations' and supports a distinct culture synonymous with invention, creativity and entrepreneurship.

	1913	2013
Los Angeles Aqueduct	233 miles	233 miles
Population of Los Angeles	300,000	3.9 million
Size of Los Angeles	86 square miles	465 square miles
L.A. daily water use	65 million gallons	500 million gallons
Per capita daily water use	160 gallons	120 gallons
Sources of water	Los Angeles Aqueduct Los Angeles River Groundwater	Los Angeles Aqueducts 1 & 2 California Aqueduct Colorado River Aqueduct Groundwater Recycled water

Our Future

The LADWP works every day to develop a reliable and high quality water supply to meet current and future needs. Dry weather years, environmental commitments and regulatory restrictions have affected our imported water supply, while groundwater contamination has reduced local supplies.

To meet the City's future water needs, LADWP will more than double local water supplies by 2030. To do so, LADWP is committed to further:

- increasing water conservation:
- investing in more stormwater capture;
- expanding water recycling; and
- cleaning up groundwater in the San Fernando Basin Aquifer.

THERE IT IS – TAKE IT!

OWENS VALLEY AND THE LOS ANGELES AQUEDUCT, 1913-2013

About the project:

There It Is—Take It! is a self-guided car audio tour through Owens Valley, California along U.S. Route 395 examining the controversial social, political, and environmental history of the Los Angeles Aqueduct. The tour illuminates various impacts this divisive water conveyance infrastructure has created within the Owens Valley over the last one hundred years of the aqueduct's existence. Stories of the aqueduct are told from multiple perspectives and viewpoints through the voices of historians, biologists, activists, native speakers, environmentalists, litigators, LADWP employees, and residents from both Los Angeles and the Owens Valley.

Designed as a free, 90-minute audio program, *There It Is—Take It!* seeks to shed light on the mutual past, present, and possible future of Los Angeles and Owens Valley—centered around its complicated and intertwined water history. The project illuminates the historic physical source of drinking water for the Los Angeles municipality while simultaneously revealing the complex relationship these two seemingly polar regions of California share through an innovative aural program incorporating interviews, field recordings, music, and archival audio that educates the listener while experiencing scenic Owens Valley landscape firsthand along U.S. Route 395. Optionally, the program may be experienced online at ***www.thereitistakeit.org***.

How to experience the tour:

- Listen to individual audio tracks online ***www.thereitistakeit.org***.
- Download and burn a CD of the entire program (requires two CDs) or download the tour to your mobile device as a podcast to experience while traveling.

How to travel the tour:

There It Is—Take It! is ideally experienced as a 90-minute self-guided car audio tour while traveling through the physical landscape of Owens Valley, California along U.S. Route 395. The tour itself is not location specific, but rather it moves through time illuminating specific issues, events, and histories that have developed over the last one hundred years of the aqueduct's existence. Geographical points of interest are mapped with GPS coordinates on individual track pages. Suggested detours of interest are also provided on the printed map.

Share your story:

Share your insights, opinions, or personal stories related to the Los Angeles Aqueduct and the Owens Valley on each individual audio track website page.

This project was made possible with support from Cal Humanities, an independent non-profit state partner of the National Endowment for the Humanities. For more information, visit ***www.calhum.org***. Any views, findings, conclusions, or recommendations expressed in *There It Is—Take It!* do not necessarily represent those of the California Council for the Humanities or the National Endowment for the Humanities.

CAL HUMANITIES

AUDIO TOUR TRACKS:

Track 1: Chris Plakos
LADWP Public Relations Officer, Chris Plakos describes the infrastructure of the Los Angeles Aqueduct system.

Track 2: Alan Bacock
Big Pine Paiute tribal member, Alan Bacock recounts the landscape of his ancestral people within the Owens Valley before European settlement.

Track 3: City of Destiny
William Kahrl and John Walton contextualize the historical underpinnings that led to the creation of the first Los Angeles Aq-

Track 4: There It Is—Take It!
William Kahrl and John Walton continue with an overview of events that led to civil unrest within the Owens Valley during the 1920s.

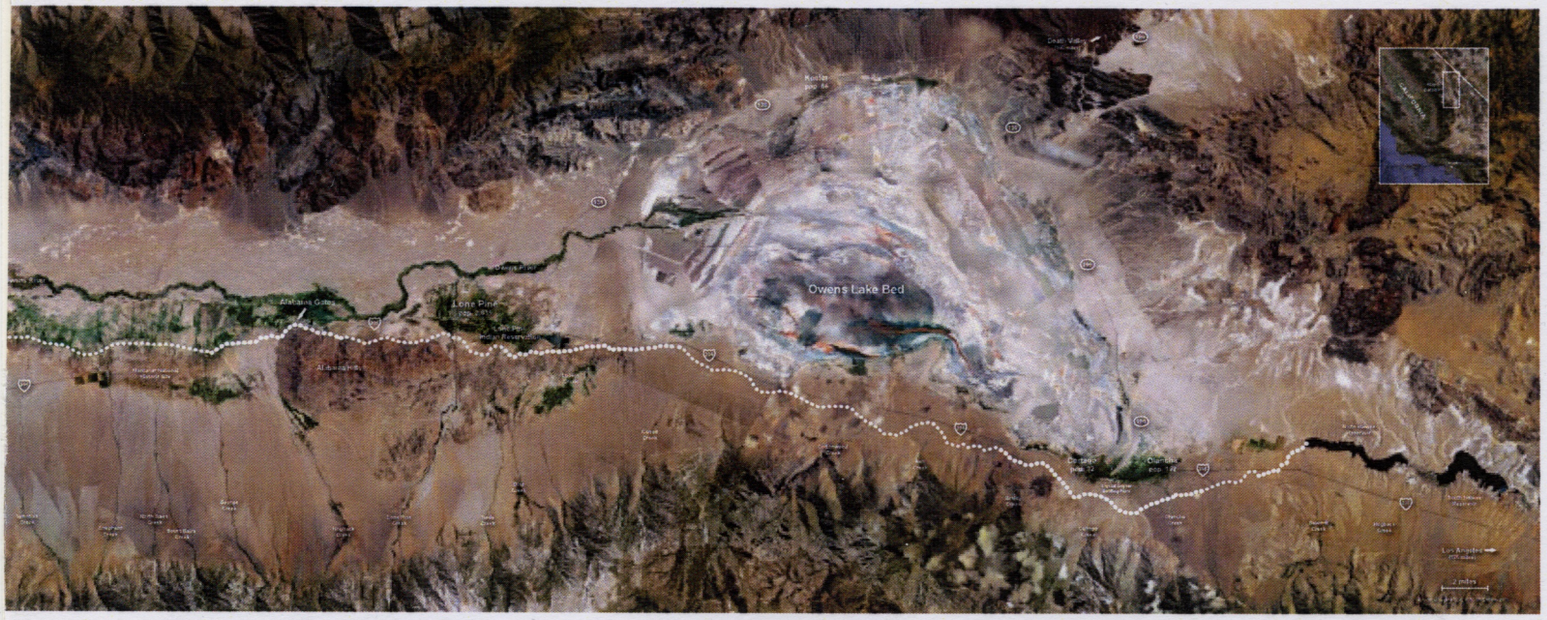
Track 5: Mark Bagley
Mark Bagley of the OVC illuminates the environmental impacts within the Owens Valley that ushered in the modern "Water Wars."

Track 6: Greg James
As former Inyo County Water Department Director, Greg James helped shape the Inyo-LA Long Term Water Agreement signed in 1991.

Track 7: Stan Matlick
Three generations of the Matlick family have ranched in the Bishop area on land they originally homesteaded over 100 years ago.

Track 8: Harry Williams
Harry Williams, a Bishop Paiute tribal member and environmental activist discusses the ancient irrigation systems of the Paiute.

Track 9: Daris Moxley
Daris Moxley and her family have operated a 200-acre LADWP ranch lease in Bishop since the 1930s.



Track 10: Benett Kessler
Benett Kessler has reported on LADWP related issues in the Owens Valley for 37 years. She is the owner and operator of Sierra Wave Media.

Track 11: Thaddeus Taylor
Thaddeus Taylor shares an ongoing dispute with LADWP over surface water flows through the 40 Acres community.

Track 12: Brian Tillemans
LADWP Water Resources Manager, Brian Tillemans discusses the Lower Owens River Project.

Track 13: Ted Schade
Owens Lake is considered the largest single source of PM-10 in the nation. Ted Schade, GBUAPCD Air Pollution Control Officer explains.

Track 14: Mike Prather
Environmental activist, Mike Prather describes the return of massive migratory bird populations on the newly rewatered Owens Lake.

Track 15: Sam Wasson
Sam Wasson, a retired LADWP employee and long-time resident of Keeler recounts an Owens Lake dust storm event.

Track 16: Bill VanWagoner
LADWP's Bill VanWagoner explains the department's dust control mitigation strategies implemented on Owens Lake.

Track 17: Nancy Masters
Citizen activism, Nancy Masters elucidates on the role of community activism and the future of the Owens Valley.

FACTS & FIGURES:

The Los Angeles Aqueduct is a water conveyance system maintained and operated by the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power—the largest publicly owned utiltiy in the nation. The first Los Angeles Aqueduct constructed in 1913 stretches 233 miles from the Owens Valley to its terminus in the San Fernando Valley north of Los Angeles. Efficiently designed as a gravity-flow conduit that generates electrical power, the original aqueduct has a flow capacity of 485 cubic feet per second (cfs) and cost the city $23 million to construct. A second 137 mile-long aqueduct with a capacity of 290 cfs was completed in 1970 at a cost of $89 million. The two aqueducts are capable of delivering a combined average of 430 million gallons of water to Los Angeles a day, supplying a 465 square-mile service area with more than 3.9 million residents. [1]

The original aqueduct constructed in 1913 begins at the Owens River intake located centrally in Owens Valley, continuing 233 miles across mountains and desert. Its terminus is at "the Cascades" located on the east side of the Golden State Freeway (near the I-5 and 405 merge in Sylmar). The second aqueduct starts at the Haiwee Reservoir, just south of Owens Lake. It roughly parallels the original aqueduct and also terminates at the Cascades. It is important to note that unlike the first aqueduct, which operates and produces electricity through its gravity flow design, the second aqueduct requires supplemental energy to pump water for export.

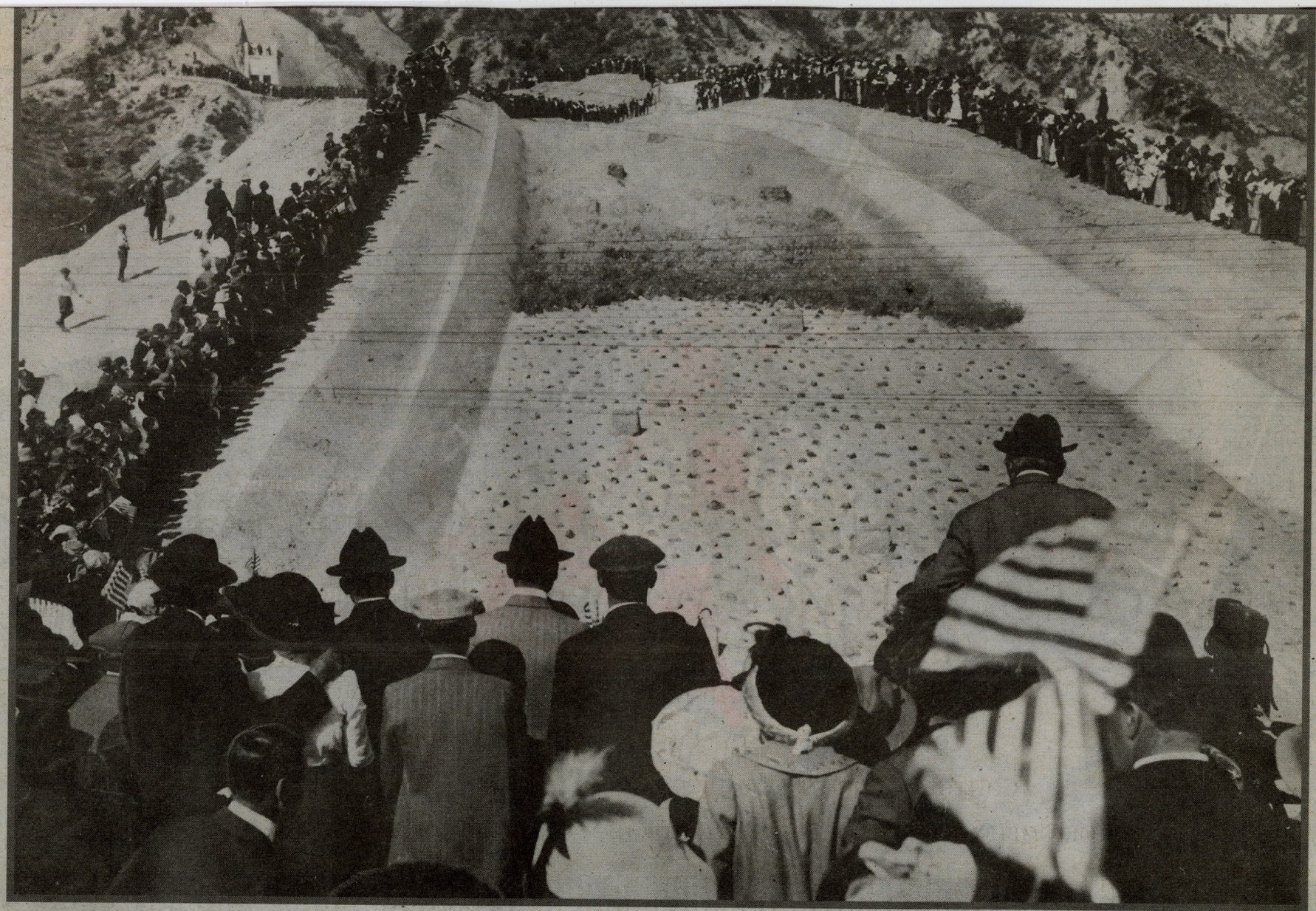
The combined infrastructure of the system is made up of 61 miles of lined and unlined channels, 161 miles of concrete conduit, 43 miles of lined tunnels, 81 miles of steel and concrete pipe. Eight storage reservoirs plus ninety-nine tanks and smaller reservoirs are located within city limits. Both aqueducts took five years to construct. [2]

The primary source of water for the aqueduct system is seasonal runoff containing snowmelt from the eastern slopes of the Sierra Nevada which drains into the larger Owens Valley watershed providing surface and sub-surface water for export. In addition, LADWP collects and exports water from the Mono Basin and its related watersheds through its second aqueduct. In order to access this water for export, the city of Los Angeles pursued an aggressive policy to acquire water rights and land within the Owens Valley in earlier part of the twentieth century. Today, the city is largest private owner of the 75-mile long Owens Valley with its 314,000 acres predominantly located within the valley's floor. Most of this land, about 260,000 acres is leased for ranching purposes with a small percentage leased for commercial or recreation use that involves strict management requirements to ensure the productivity and overall health of the watershed. Nearly 95 percent of lands within Inyo County are either owned by the city of Los Angeles, the state of California or the federal government. [3]

Historically, the Los Angeles Aqueduct system provided nearly 75 percent of the city's water supply up through the 1980s. However, due to restrictions and reallocation of water for environmental concerns this amount has been reduced dramatically. [4] According to 2012 LADWP figures; 36 percent of Los Angeles' water comes from the Los Angeles Aqueduct system; 52 percent from the Metropolitan Water District's (MWD) Colorado River Aqueduct supply; 11 percent from local groundwater sources; and 1 percent is from recycled sources. [5] About 72 percent of this water residential use; 25 percent is for commercial and government uses; and 3 percent is for industrial use. [6] Some areas, such as San Pedro are served water from the MWD exclusively, others, such as Eagle Rock and east Los Angeles are served a mix of MWD and Los Angeles Aqueduct water. The remaining areas are predominately served a mix of water from the State Water Project combined with water from the Los Angeles Aqueduct. [7] Most agree that the highest quality and best tasting water comes from the Eastern Sierra supply.

Although the Los Angeles Aqueduct is no longer considered the nearly exclusive municipal water supply for the city, it remains for many Los Angelenos the symbolic source of its drinking water.

Notes: [1] Source: LADWP website Los Angeles Aqueduct Facts & Figures. Last accessed 5/21/12. [2] Ibid. [3] Greg James "Changing Perspectives on Groundwater Management: The Owens Valley Story," Inyo County Water Department website. Last accessed 5/18/12. [4] Interview with Fred Baker, Wastewater Engineer, Manager of Transmission Operations, LADWP in March 2012. [5] Based on a five-year average as stated on LADWP website Water Facts & Figures, dated March 16, 2012. Last accessed 5/21/12. [6] "The Los Angeles Aqueduct," Aqueduct.com website. Last accessed 5/21/12. [7] Ibid Prof. Baker interview.



Los Angeles Times

'Mountain river flows to L.A.'s gates'

Nov. 5, 1913: More than 40,000 people came by train, automobile and motorcycle to witness the arrival of water from the Owens River Valley in the Los Angeles Aqueduct. President Woodrow Wilson wired congratulations, and Chief Engineer William Mulholland was praised as the man of the hour. "This is a great event fraught with the greatest importance to the future prosperity of this city," Mulholland said. The Times' headline the next day: "Glorious mountain river now flows to Los Angeles' gates."

8-30-2003

The Second Los Angeles Aqueduct

"The challenge of water supply continued to press.

"While the City had taken virtually its full Mono Basin entitlement for several years between 1941 and 1970, it found it could not divert the full amount authorized by the 1940s water rights permits on a long-term basis without constructing additional conveyance facilities downstream from Mono Basin. The Water Rights Board and the Department of Water Resources urged the City to take steps to develop its full entitlement or risk the potential that other appropriations might be granted by the Water Rights Board.

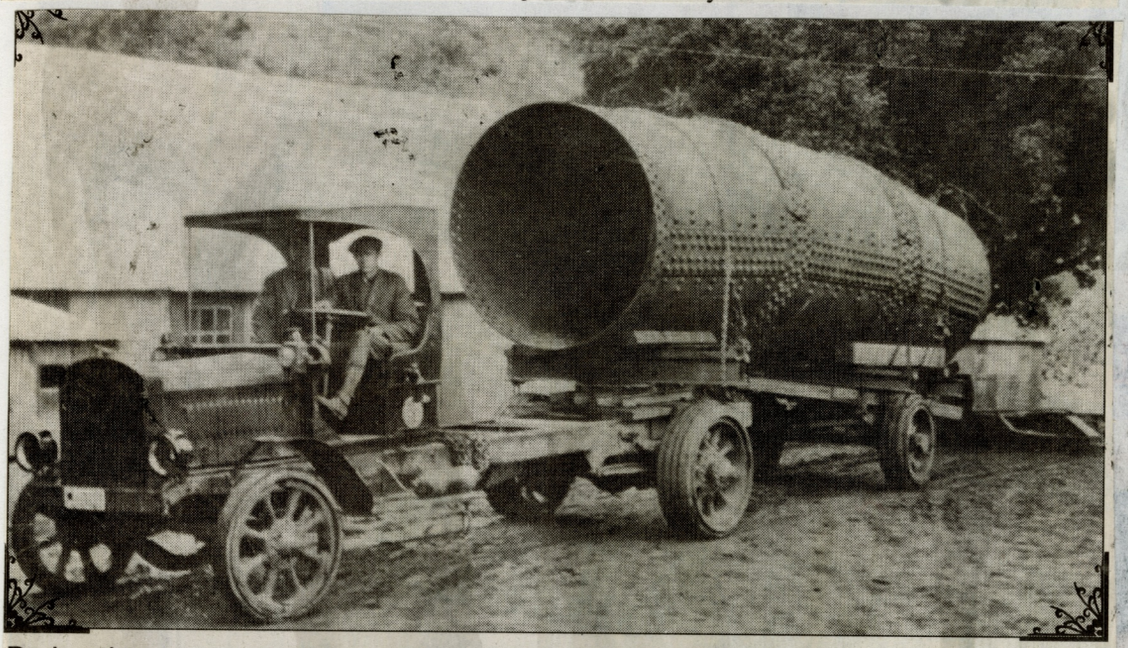
Los Angeles.

"The Second Los Aqueduct, an $89 million facility, was completed in 1970. Beginning at Haiwee Reservoir, just south of the Owens dry lake bed, this project was shorter, half as wide as Mulholland's 'ditch,' and was easier to build as a result of improved construction equipment and the lower cost of steel pipe. The new aqueduct added another 50 percent capacity to the water system. The two Los Angeles Aqueducts now deliver an average of 430 million gallons a day to the city.

"Under normal circumstances, 70 percent of the city's

Aqueduct was constructed by the City of Los Angeles soon after the turn of the century, and commenced delivering the water from the Owens Valley in 1913. It has provided the sinew to build Los Angeles into the largest metropolitan area in the entire United States.

"During the next 50 years, use of the aqueduct system increased to keep pace with the expanding City growth. The City acquired additional water rights in the Mono Basin-Owens Valley area, extending its intake system north into the Mono Basin, for a total length of 338 miles.



During the construction of the first Los Angeles Aqueduct this is how pipe was transported to job sites. *Photo from the book "The Second Los Angeles Aqueduct"/Courtesy of Chris Plakos, Los Angeles Department of Water and Power*

"At the same time, a U.S. Supreme Court decision in 1963 (Arizona vs. California) had allocated Arizona more water from the Colorado River, reducing MWD's (Metropolitan Water District's) entitlement of Colorado River water by more than 50 percent. In addition, water from the MWD was expensive because of the high energy costs involved in delivering it. This consideration, plus the availability of higher quality water, led to a decision to bring more Eastern Sierra water to

water comes from the Eastern Sierra. Wells in the San Fernando Valley and other local groundwater basins supply 15 percent, and purchases from MWD furnish the last 15 percent. From a system of ditches and waterwheels in the 1780s, the system has grown to 105 reservoirs, including four major reservoirs along the aqueduct system."

– From the website laaqueduct.com

"The great Owens River

"In 1963 the Department of Water and Power decided to embark on construction of the second barrel of the aqueduct, later to become known as the 'Second Los Angeles Aqueduct,' roughly parallel with the first and increasing the delivery of water by about one-half. The new aqueduct, 177 miles long, was designed for a mean annual flow of 210 cfs, or 152,000 acre-feet per year, with an estimated unit construction cost of $25 per acre-foot.

"... The project was the

OVER

largest single capital investment in Water System history … The Land and Legal Divisions acquired 270 separate parcels of privately-owned land, and right-of-way over 74 miles of 'public lands.'

"… The water flows entirely by gravity, from an elevation of 3,760 feet at Haiwee Reservoir, through two power drops, to an elevation of 1,200 feet at Upper Van Norman Reservoir. For purposes of design and construction, the aqueduct was divided into 12 sections. Sections were then grouped, with those between Fairmont Reservoir (just north of Los Angeles) and Haiwee Reservoir known as the 'Northern Section,' some 123 miles long, designed to carry 273 cfs – and the Saugus Pipeline from Drinkwater Reservoir (also just north of Los Angeles) to Van Norman Reservoirs, known as the 'Southern Section,' designed for a capacity of 300 cfs.

" … A time schedule for construction was established, and it was determined to build the Saugus Pipeline first, since it was capable of advantageous operation using First Aqueduct water. The other segments would be built in a south-to-north sequence starting with the Antelope Valley Pipeline, the first one of the Northern Section.

"… Contract construction started on August 10, 1965, when the first contract was awarded to R.A. Wattson Co. and Winston Bros. Co., a Joint Venture, for Saugus Pipeline Part I. It was concluded on June 22, 1970, when the Freeman and Bishops Claim Conduits were accepted from Griffith Co., the contractor.

"… Comparing the First and Second Aqueducts produces some revealing similarities and differences. First and most obviously, the total costs: the original aqueduct, 233 miles in length, was completed at a cost of $24,500,000; the second, 177 miles long, cost $89,200,000, a very reasonable figure considering the spiral of inflation in 60 years, and both were close to the original estimates.

"It is worthy to note here too, that the original aqueduct was built in its entirety by Department forces, while a majority of the second line was constructed under contract.

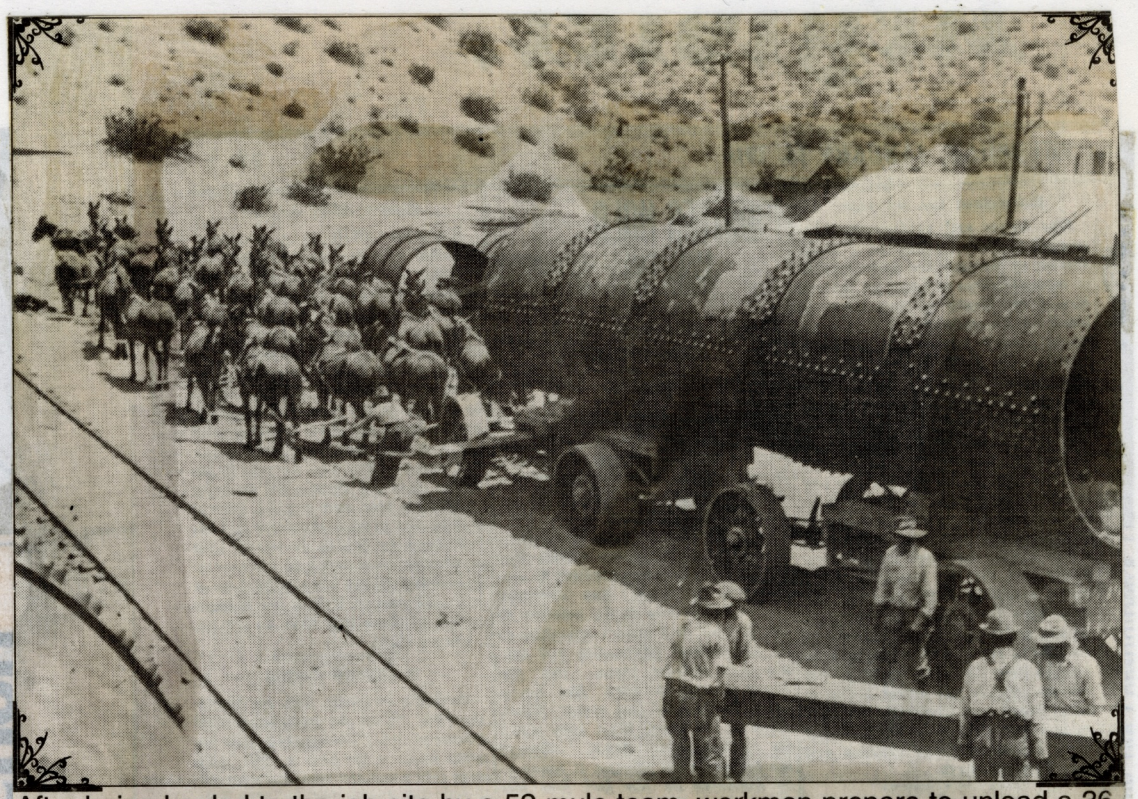
" … There is a revealing comparison in terms of type of construction. In the original aqueduct, there was extensive use of tunnels for water conveyance. In the second, tunneling was held to a minimum, one-half of the line is under pressure and the water is carried in welded steel pipe. Steel pipe was used in the first version only for siphons across those canyons that interrupted the tunnels.

"… Route selection of the First Aqueduct was vindicated and verified when extensive studies for the Second Aqueduct resulted in an almost totally parallel alignment, except in the Antelope Valley, where the use of pressure pipe allowed a virtually straight-line crossing of the valley instead of the flow-line route around the rim of the valley used in the earlier construction.

"… By reducing expensive purchases from sources beyond the City's control, the Second Aqueduct has guaranteed that the Los Angeles water consumer will be paying less for water than if the project had not been built. The Second Aqueduct is a successful construction project and, more importantly, a very economic investment benefitting the customers of the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power."

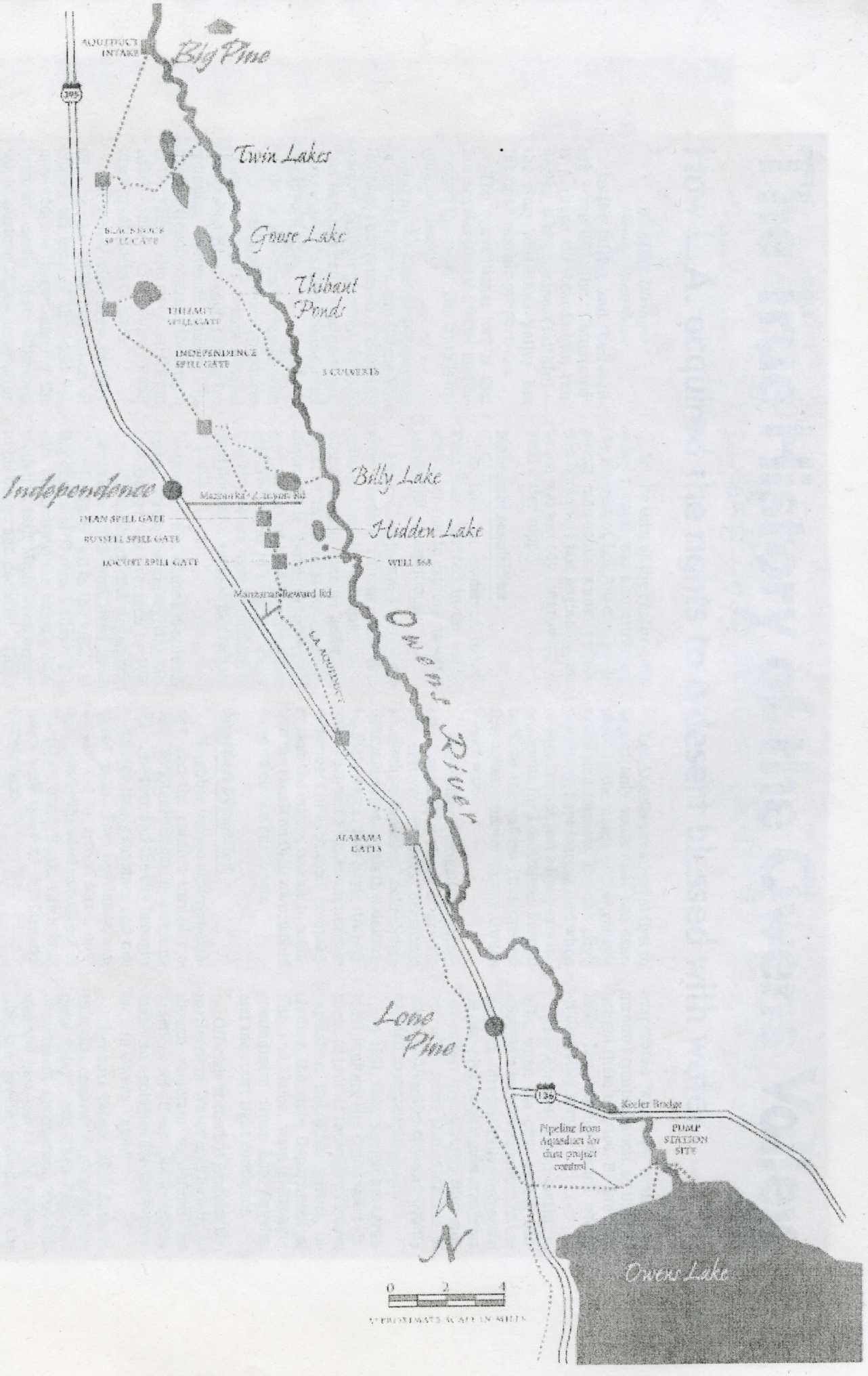
– From the book "The Second Los Angeles Aqueduct," First Edition, published 1971 by The Department of Water and Power.

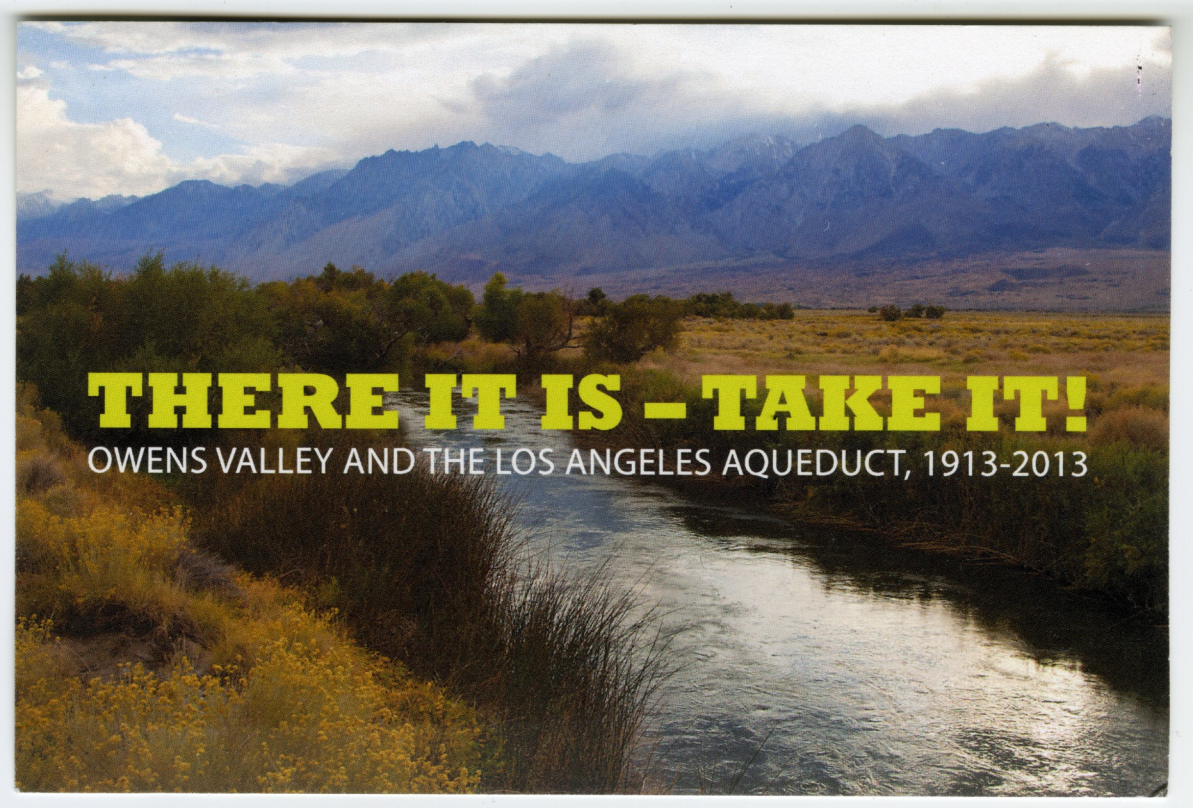
The modern transportation of pipe during construction of the second Los Angeles Aqueduct. *Photo from the book "The Second Los Angeles Aqueduct"/Courtesy of Chris Plakos, Los Angeles Department of Water and Power*



After being hauled to the job site by a 52-mule team, workmen prepare to unload a 36-foot length of pipe section during construction of the first Los Angeles Aqueduct. *Photo from the book "The Second Los Angeles Aqueduct"/Courtesy of Chris Plakos, Los Angeles Department of Water and Power*

This is how an 80-foot long pipe section was unloaded during the construction of the second Los Angeles Aqueduct. *Photo from the book "The Second Los Angeles Aqueduct"/Courtesy of Chris Plakos, Los Angeles Department of Water and Power*


AQUEDUCT INTAKE
Big Pine
395
Twin Lakes
BLACKROCK SPILLGATE
Goose Lake
Thibaut Ponds
THIBAUT SPILL GATE
INDEPENDENCE SPILL GATE
3 CULVERTS
Billy Lake
Independence
Manzanar Reward Rd
UIAN SPILL GATE
Hidden Lake
RUSSELL SPILL GATE
LOCKIPE SPILL GATE
WELL 368
Manzanar Reward Rd
LA ACQUEDUCT
Owens River
ALABAMA GATES
Lone Pine
136
Keeler Bridge
Pipeline from Aqueduct for dust project control
PUMP STATION SITE
Owens Lake
N
0
2
4
APPROXIMATE SCALE IN MILES


THERE IT IS – TAKE IT!
OWENS VALLEY AND THE LOS ANGELES AQUEDUCT, 1913-2013

THERE IT IS—TAKE IT! is a self-guided car audio tour through Owens Valley, California along U.S. Route 395 examining the controversial social, political, and environmental history of the Los Angeles Aqueduct system. The tour illuminates various impacts this divisive water conveyance infrastructure has created within the Owens Valley over the last one hundred years of aqueduct's existence. Stories of the aqueduct are told from multiple perspectives and viewpoints through the voices of historians, biologists, activists, native speakers, environmentalists, litigators, LADWP employees, and residents from both Los Angeles and the Owens Valley in an effort to shed light on the mutual past, present, and possible future of these two intertwined California regions.

Listen or download the audio podcast for free at: www.thereitistakeit.org.

This project was made possible with support from Cal Humanities, an independent non-profit state partner of the National Endowment for the Humanities. For more information, visit www.calhum.org. Any views, findings, conclusions, or recommendations expressed in this program do not necessarily represent those of Cal Humanities or the National Endowment for the Humanities.

CAL HUMANITIES Community Stories

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Los Angeles Aqueduct local history binder content list

Compiled by Bob Larson (1934-2024)

Collection of magazine articles, newspaper clippings, and other printed ephemera related to the Los Angeles Aqueduct; Los Angeles Department of Water and Power; City of Los Angeles' activity in Inyo County / the Owens Valley; and the so-called California Water Wars of the 20th century.

Item compiled by/from the collection of Robert Wood "Bob" Larson (1934-2024). Bob Larson was a teacher at Salinas High School in Salinas, California for many years. Bob inherited his aunt Enid A. Larson's home in Big Pine, Inyo County, California in 1991, and permanently relocated to Big Pine in 2013. He continued his aunt Enid's collection related to Owens Valley History, and he accumulated articles and books on the natural and human history of Inyo County.

From the Inyo County Free Library Local History Room Collection. Scanned by the Inyo County Free Library in April 2026.

Background on the Los Angeles Aqueduct:

The Los Angeles Aqueduct is a 233-mile pipeline that conveys water from snowmelt runoff from the Sierra Nevada Mountains in California's Inyo and Mono Counties to the City of Los Angeles. The project was announced in 1905, construction began in 1908, and the fully completed pipeline opened in November 1903. The project was designed by William Mulholland (1855-1935), head of the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power (often abbreviated as LADWP or DWP).

The Los Angeles Aqueduct has been highly controversial within Inyo County since the project was first announced, and remains so through today. Critics of the aqueduct project cite negative its environmental effects and challenges to local property ownership, among other issues. Supporters of the aqueduct cite that Los Angeles has helped preserve and make publicly accessible much of the land that it now owns within the Owens Valley region.

Binder contents (in order of appearance):

Binder cover: "DWP Boss" cartoon from the *Inyo-Mono News-Letter*, 3 Oct 1977

Newsletter: *The Rainshadow* by The Owens Valley Committee, Spring / Summer 2013, Vol. 8, No. 1. Articles include "Aqueduct Centennial 2013: 100 Years of Injustice"; "Current Owens Valley Water Issues"; "Matching Grant Deadline Nears"; "OVC Mission / Goals"

Newspaper clipping: *Inyo Register* (Bishop, Inyo, California), 1 Aug 2013, p. 4. "Letters to the Editor: One of many 'truths' presented in historical books" written by Rob Pearce of Bishop

[grandson of Arlie Brierly] regarding his 1999 book *The Owens Valley Controversy and A.A. Brierly: The Untold Story*;

Newspaper clipping: *Inyo Register*, 25 July 2013, p. 3. "Monitoring a river's rebirth – Eastern Sierra Watershed Project to give presentation on Lower Owens' dramatic transformation Saturday" by Jon Klusmire

Newspaper clipping: *Inyo Register*, 27 July 2013, p. 4. "Letters to the Editor: We stole it fair and square" by Daniel Prichett, Bishop

Newspaper clipping: *Inyo Register*, 13 Aug 2013, p. 9. "Everyone deserves a 'Pa' in their lives like A.A. Brierly" by Rob Pearce, Ph.D. [grandson of Arlie Brierly]

Newspaper clipping: *Inyo Register*, 21 Feb 2019, p. 2. "Throwback Thursday: Busted Bankers" featuring mug shots of Inyo County Bank co-owners and brothers Wilfred and Mark Watterson following their 1927 trial and conviction

Newspaper clipping: *Los Angeles Times*, 29 Mar 2015, p. F8. "William Mullholland, in front, with water commissioner Reginaldo de Valle in a section of 80-inch pipe circa 1916."

Newspaper clipping: unknown periodical. "The Rape of Owens Valley Continues." [Advertisement? Appears in *Inyo Register* issues from 15 Oct 1970 through 19 Aug 1971]

Periodical clipping: *Intake* magazine by Los Angeles Department of Water and Power, Dec 1976. Cover of the issue featuring a photograph of the LA DWP headquarters and fountain. Includes article, "Drought intensifies historical controversy" by LADWP general manager and chief engineer Louis H. Winnard.

Newspaper clipping: *The Washington Post*, 8 Sep 1976. "Los Angeles Is Draining Once-Verdant Owens Valley" by Joel Kotkin

Periodical clipping photocopy: *Sierra Life* magazine, Jan / Feb 1986, Vol. 6, No. 1, p. 38-47. "Water and Power", an excerpt from *Water and Power* by William Kahrl, described as "an incisive history of the conflict over Los Angeles' water supply in the Owens Valley."

Unknown periodical clipping. "How Los Angeles' Water District Was 1st Formed." Credited as "Part 4" in a series by CA State Senator F. Presley Abshire "on California's water problem and the facts behind the issues being debated in the State Legislature." [Piece appeared syndicated in many California newspapers c. May 1957.]

Periodical clipping photocopy: *Historic Legends of Inyo County*, hand dated 1976, p. 8-11 "The Owens Valley Water War."

Newspaper clipping: *Inyo Register*, 26 Sep 2013, p. 1: "Archaeologist digs up insight about life in aqueduct camp – Excavation both confirms and contradicts historical accounts of life for those building 'modern marvel'" by Jon Klusmire

School paper: “Whiskey Is for Drinking – Water IS for Fighting Over” by Abby Wagner, “(age 12), 7th Grade Language Arts Personal Feature Article – Noe Middle School – Jefferson County Public Schools, Louisville KY.” School paper written by Abby Wagner, granddaughter of Robert Wood “Bob” Larson Jr. [compiler of this collection]. Includes excerpts of an interview with Bob.

Periodical clipping: *American Heritage*, Dec 1961, Vol. 13, No. 1, p. 30-35; 103-107. “The Water War” by Remi Nadeau

Periodical clipping: *Westways*, Nov 1992, p. 46-51; 57. “Journey to the Source: A Drive up the 338-Mile Los Angeles Aqueduct is a Trip Back in Time to the Birth of a Thirsty Metropolis” by Peter Sagal

Newspaper clipping: *Los Angeles Times*, 25 Jul 1998, p. B7. Editorial, “The Owens Irony – L.A. water grab may have saved what the valley values most”

Newspaper clipping: *Inyo Register*, 6 Dec 2012, p. A5. “A look back at the L.A. Aqueduct’s construction – Museum’s 2013 calendar chronicles historic moment in valley’s past” by Jon Klusmire. Photo of Bessie Van Norman, wife of LA DWP supervisor Harvey Van Norman.

Poem and drawings: “The Valley of Broken Hearts – An Echo From The Owens River Valley” by Hazel M. Partridge, “decorations” by Charles Lorin Ray

Newspaper clipping: *Inyo Register*, 7 Mar 2013, p. 10. “[John Walton to speak at annual Friends of Museum gathering] Author’s presentation to show how Owens Valley has been shaped by LA.”

Periodical clipping (photocopy): *Municipal League of Los Angeles Bulletin*, 15 Jul 1924, Vol. 1 No. 12. “The Owens Valley ‘Revolt’”

Periodical clipping photocopy: *Inyo* Register, 25 Aug 2012, p. A4. “Letters to the Editor: DWP plans to sell Pines Cafe at public auction” by James G. Yannotta, Manager of Aqueduct, LADWP; and “’Celebrating’ the Aqueduct centennial” by Daniel Pritchett of Bishop

Periodical clipping: *Mammoth Sierra Magazine*, Oct/Nov 2012. Cover features “The Great Water War” with John Miur and James Phelan. Article: “The Vote That Is 100 Years Late: This November, voters will finally have a voice in the decision to dam Yosemite’s Hetch Hetchy Valley” by Lyra Pierotti

Newspaper clipping: *Los Angeles Times*, 20 Jul 1998, p. B5. “Closing a Chapter in the City’s Sinful Water History – Owens Valley: It takes a lot more than a movie to get some historical perspective on the city’s appetite for water” by Abraham Hoffman

Newspaper clipping: *Inyo Register*, 5 Oct 2019, p. 14. “How Mono boomed during the Great Depression”

Newspaper clipping: *San Francisco Chronicle*, 8 Jun 1993, p. A7. "The True History of the Owens Valley – How LA acquired the rights to a desert blessed with water" by Elliott Diringer. Mentions creation of the LA Aqueduct; residents Al Giraud; Ken Steward;

Unknown periodical clipping: "Water News Updates: Stewards, LA sign settlement; new well drilled on the ranch" [hand dated Sept. 1995]

Document: "Water in the Owens Valley" by Arlie "A.A." Brierly

Periodical clipping: *Harpers* magazine, [hand dated March 1981]. "Water and Power – The Owens Valley water war" by Page Stegner

Document: Letter from Inyo County District Attorney Jess Hessian to California State Bank Examiner Will C. Wood dated 21 Mar 1927, Independence. "Copy" written at top. Hessian writes Wood concerning a recent meeting with Wood's "representative Mr. Angell, "who called for the purpose of obtaining information to guide you in passing on the application for a bank charter for some point in Owens Valley." Hessian speaks well of the Watterson Brothers of the Inyo County Bank.

Document: Letter from Cornelius Vanderbilt Jr. (1898-1974) to Elsie May Watterson (1885-1967) dated 8 March 1928. Vanderbilt, a newspaper publisher who was disinherited by his prestigious family when he entered the trade, writes Watterson regarding the situation of her brothers Mark and Wilfred, who by this time had been convicted of financial crimes regarding the Inyo County Bank. Vanderbilt states that he attempted to convince other newspaper men Spreckles, Boody, and William Randolph Hearst on the innocence of the Wattersons, but each felt that they were guilty.

Document: Letter from Cornelius Vanderbilt Jr. (1898-1974) to Elsie May Watterson (1885-1967) dated 11 Apr 1928. Brief letter thanking Elsie for her recent letter.

Document: Letter from Cornelius Vanderbilt Jr. (1898-1974) to Elsie May Watterson (1885-1967) dated 21 Mar 1928. Vanderbilt thanks Watterson for her letter of March 19, and hopes they can get together at some point.

Document: Letter from Curt Eugene Kunze (1878-1928) to Charles L. Neumiller, Chairman of the California Prison Board at San Quentin, dated 12 Dec 1928. Kunze was married to the sister of Mark and Wilfred Watterson, Isabel S. Watterson Kunze (1879-1969). Kunze wrote Neumiller regarding the family history of the Wattersons in the Owens Valley; their businesses in Inyo County; the collapse of the Inyo County Bank; their trial. Kunze closes by encouraging their early parole. Kunze died 21 Dec 1928, about two weeks after this letter is dated.

Document: Copy [?] of letter from Albert A. Rosenshine of San Francisco to Jerome Watterson at Keeler, dated 6 Jan 1930. Rosenshine was attorney for the California State Banking Department, and he is responding to a letter from Jerome dated 3 Jan 1930 about his brothers Mark and Wilfred Watterson. Rosenshine responds to Jerome's letter regarding cases about the

"homesteads declared on the property of the wives of these gentlemen." He closes by saying "I do not believe that [Mark and Wilfred] concealed money and, while I am not condoning what they did, I sympathize with them, and certainly with you."

Document: Copy [?] of letter from Albert B. Whieldon to Jerome Watterson at Bishop dated 2 Dec 1930. Whieldon tells Watterson that his letter of 26 Nov 1930 was received, and states that "Mr. La Bree, receiver of the Inyo County Bank, on a trip with me from Bishop to Los Angeles, made the statement that, if the City of Los Angeles had bought the different towns in Inyo County on the same time they had agreed to, which was the June before the bank failures, there would have been no failures, as the boys would have had the money to have taken care of their debts."

Document: Copy [?] of letter from Rev. Monsignor John J. Crowley [aka Father John Crowley] to Daniel O'Brien, Chairman of the State Crime Commission at San Francisco, dated 24 Apr 1931. Crowley, now living in Fresno, states that he was pastor of Inyo County "up to six years ago", and was acquainted with Mark and Wilfred Watterson. Crowley notes that they had at that point served "about half of the required sentence," they had "suffered enough for what they did," and encourages O'Brien to release them on parole.

Document: Original letter from John J. Martin, Right of Way & Land Agent for LA DWP to Owen Wood Larson (1870-1946) of Petaluma CA, dated 13 Aug 1926. Letter refers to Larson's letter from 11 Aug 1926 regarding "final payment on Contract of Purchase and Sale between yourself and the Board of Water and Power Commissioners of the City of Los Angeles." States that "all payments covering Inyo County property are now being handled by the office of the Department of Water and Power at Bishop, California" and suggests to contact that office regarding his concern.

Document: Original letter from William J. George, cashier at First National Bank (owned by Mark and Wilfred Watterson) to Owen Wood Larson of Petaluma, dated 14 Aug 1926. The letter states they had received Larson's letter of 11 Aug 1926 regarding "final payment under your Contract of Purchase and Sale with the Board of Water and Power Commissioners of the City of Los Angeles" and that the check had been forwarded to the bank in Petaluma.

Document: Letter from Right of Way & Land Agent (unsigned) to LA Department of Water & Power office at Bishop, attention Mr. Ford Hendricks, dated 13 Aug 1926. The letter encourages the recipients to forward the final payment to Owen Wood Larson.

Newspaper clipping: *Los Angeles Times*, 7 Jul 2011, p. A8. "[Catherine Mulholland, 1923-2011] Author on Family's Legacy – Historian explored grandfather's legacy" by Elaine Woo

Unknown periodical clipping: "History of the Los Angeles Aqueduct"

Newspaper clipping: *Los Angeles Times*, 10 Jul 2011, p. A15. "Mulholland's Los Angeles – Whether a pioneer or pirate, or both, his aqueduct made today's metropolis possible"

Newspaper clipping: *Inyo Register* [hand dated 9 May 2013]. "Photo exhibit focuses on the construction of the 233-mile long Aqueduct" by Jon Klusmire

Newspaper clipping: *Inyo Register*, 2 Jun 2013, p. 1. "'Vision or Villainy' author talks about Austins, L.A.'s celebration – Free presentation to include Q&A in American Legion Hall in Independence" by Jon Klusmire

Newspaper clipping: *Inyo Register*, 12 Sep 2013, p. 1. "One of history's 'What Ifs?' – If Mary Austin and William Mulholland had a conversation about water…" by Jon Klusmire

Newspaper clipping: *Los Angeles Times*, 3 Nov 2013, p. A26. "Mulholland's long shadow – His LA Aqueduct changed the city – and water politics – forever" by William Kahrl (author of *Water & Power*)

Document: Letter from Robert Pearce (grandson of A.A. Brierly) to Bob Larson , dated 12 Nov 2013. Letter starts with "Here is the document Enid gave me that I told you about…" Corresponds to following item "Two Sides to Every Question."

Document: "Two Sides to Every Question" signed by George Watterson (uncle of the Watterson Brothers) and William Symons regarding their stance "negotiation and recommending an agreement with the City of Los Angeles." Handwritten: "From the file of Enid A. Larson." Typed date of 22 Dec 1923.

Newspaper clipping: *Inyo Register*, 11 Oct 2012, p. A1. "L.A. Aqueduct in spotlight – Audio tour release, documentary screening and kick-off of architecture project planned" by Mike Gervais

Newspaper clipping: *The Sierra Reader* (Bishop CA), [hand dated 25 Oct 2012]. "'Aqueduct Futures Project': Ambitious Undertaking by Cal Poly Pomona Students" by Christina Reed

Newspaper clipping: *Inyo Register*, 31 Jan 2013, p. 3. "Cal Poly celebrates aqueduct anniversary – Landscape design students seek citizen input on project"

Newspaper clipping: *Inyo Register*, 22 Jan 2013, p. 1. "LA City Council declares 2013 'Year of the Aqueduct' – Events, exhibits locally and in Southern California will be recognizing completion of 'engineering marvel'" by Mike Gervais

Newspaper clipping: *Inyo Register*, 17 Oct 2013, p. 1. "'100 Mules' head out Friday en route to Los Angeles – Independence and Lone Pine host events as historic pack train begins following aqueduct's 240-mile path" by Jon Klusmire

Website printout from anothercityispossible.com: "100 Mules Walking the Los Angeles Aqueduct"

Unknown periodical clipping: "Aqueduct: 100 Years" by Stacy Corless

Brochure: "L.A. Aqueduct Centennial 2013" by Los Angeles Department of Water and Power.

Document: Advertisement for audio tour and website There It Is—Take It!: Owens Valley and the Los Angeles Aqueduct, 1913-2013. http://www.thereitistakeit.org

Newspaper clipping: *Los Angeles Times*, 6 Dec 2011, p. U8. "Mountain river flows to LA's gates"

Unknown periodical clipping [*Inyo Register*?; hand dated 30 Aug 2003]: "The Second Los Angeles Aqueduct"

Document: Printed / photocopy of map of Owens Valley from Big Pine ("Aqueduct Intake") to the top of Owens Lake. Map shows Los Angeles Aqueduct as well as Twin Lakes, Goose Lake, Thibaut Ponds, Billy Lake, Hidden Lake.

Document: Postcard advertisement for audio tour and website There It Is—Take It!: Owens Valley and the Los Angeles Aqueduct, 1913-2013. http://www.thereitistakeit.org